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PRECEPTS AND JUDGMENTS

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BY

MARSHAL FOCH

AUTHOR OF "THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR"

WITH A SKETCH OF THE MILITARY CAREER OF MARSHAL FOCH BY

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OF THE FRENCH SERVICE

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE translator would like to point out, though the direction should hardly be necessary, that he has introduced no modification, criticism, or even elucidation of his original even in a footnote, and that the historical statements appearing especially in the introductory sketch or study are their author's alone. He would further point out that such divergences from a literal rendering of the text as may be observed are due to nothing more than the necessity of rendering modern French into passably readable English. To translate idiomatic French into idiomatic English is impossible. The most that can be done is a rendering, and even so the mere sense of the original can only be procured at the expense of a certain foreign flavour: so widely have the modes of thought and expression in France and England diverged since the eighteenth century.

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PRECEPTS AND JUDGMENTS

A SKETCH OF THE MILITARY CAREER OF MARSHAL FOCH

By Major A. Grasset, of the French Service

I

Ferdinand Foch was born on the 4th of August, 1851, at Tarbes; his father was at that moment Secretary-General to the Prefecture. He began his schooling in a college of that town, continued it at Rodez, then at Polignan with the Jesuits, and ended at the Jesuit College of St. Michel at Saint-Etienne, where his father had been appointed Treasurer and Paymaster.

He was studious and concentrated in his work, and rather more serious than his years might allow for. As he was inclined to physics and history, the Jesuit fathers had determined to send him to the Polytechnic. In 1869 they sent him to Metz, to their celebrated establishment of Saint Clement in that town; and there he passed one year coaching for the examination.

The Franco-Prussian war broke out before this year was over, and young Foch, who had every prospect of success in the entrance competition, enlisted as a volunteer; but the armistice came before he had completed his training in depot, and before he could do anything for his country, he witnessed the disaster. His vocation for the

Army was not affected; but he understood now that enthusiasm and faith are not enough to secure victory; that science must be added. And without losing a moment he returned to his work.

The College of Saint Clement at Metz was occupied by the German soldiery, who filled its courts and corridors. Nancy, where his entrance examination for the Polytechnic was held, the old capital of Lorraine, was the headquarters of Manteuffel, and the Stanislas Square echoed every evening with the sound of the German marching and with their bugle calls. Every evening, as he came in after the day's examination work, Ferdinand Foch looked out upon those scenes; and he never forgot them.

On the 1st of November, 1871, he entered the Polytechnic School. In 1873 he was at Fontainebleau; in 1875, Lieutenant in the 24th of Artillery at Tarbes. As he was keen upon horsemanship, he entered Saumur in 1877; he became Captain in the 10th Regiment of Artillery at Rennes, in 1878, and entered the School of War in 1885. He was attached to the Staff of the Montpellier Division up to 1891, in which year he reached the rank of Major, and was summoned to the 3rd Bureau of the General Staff of the Army. After commanding a group of mounted batteries of the 13th Regiment of Artillery at Vincennes, he was recalled, in 1894, to the General Staff of the Army, and finally appointed, on the 31st of October, 1895, Supplementary Professor of Military History, Strategy and Tactics. In 1896 he received his promotion as Lieutenant-Colonel and the full title of Professor.

Colonel Foch's lectures produced a profound impression on all the officers who were privileged to hear them. The man had personal magnetism. He was clean-cut in figure and careful in manner. "He struck every one," says a witness of this phase in his career, "by the mixture of energy with

calm and directness in his expression. He spoke without gestures, with authority and conviction, in a grave, somewhat monotonous voice, invariably appealing to logical process, and even having recourse to mathematical metaphors. He was sometimes difficult to follow through the exuberant wealth of idea that lay behind his words, but he held one's attention by the depth of his views as much as by the sincerity of his accent."

These lectures, which trained several generations of officers of the Staff, are contained in two books, *The Conduct of War* and *The Principles of War*. The leading ideas which appear in these treatises are simple and illuminating. In their largest lines they are somewhat as follows—

War, as Napoleon said, is a simple art and lies wholly in its execution.

Foch reiterates this. The art of war is simple, in its widest sense, for the most marvellous conceptions of strategy are open for any one to understand, and are discussed every day in general conversation. Yes, the art is simple enough in its conception, but, unfortunately, complicated in its execution; for that execution necessitates the accommodation of profound knowledge in the material and moral means at one's disposal with an equally profound knowledge of the highly complicated organization of an army. The execution of any strategical conception also demands in the general a commanding will, a tenacity, an energy and a strength of soul which no disaster can reduce. And all these qualities must be made in some fashion to produce their irresistible effect upon the mass of which he is the chief. The art of war, therefore, simple though it be in theory, is, in practice, accessible to but a very small number of men.

What are the steps by which one may initiate oneself in this art?

First of all, the soldier must appreciate the greatness of his task and rise to it; he must train himself to think in terms of his business, and to reach that state of mind the best thing is, obviously, to have experience.

Now it is not possible to obtain experience without actually making war, and, moreover, without making war continually.

But this would seem impossible, for war is of its nature no more than a violent crisis, and, normally, a temporary one.

Yet there are two other means of acquiring experience.

First the study of history, the consideration of events that have taken place in war, and of the campaigns of the great captains. It was upon these lines that Napoleon trained himself.

Secondly, there is the study of concrete cases; that is, of problems based upon realities as opposed to deductive abstractions. Here is a particular known piece of ground, a general situation which can be defined; a body of troops of which the material and moral value are known; here is a definite order given to these troops. Given all these data, the object of one's study consists in discovering how, in such circumstances, one may reach a decision through action, for which decision reasons can be given. And the rôle of the professor is this: to appeal continually to the common sense and intelligence of his pupils until he has created in them the habit of treating all questions in one spirit; he will then have brought into being a *unity of doctrine* which, in the moment of need, when every executant has to act on his own full initiative, will assure a perfect co-ordination of effort from all those brains towards the common objective assigned by the higher command.

Let us suppose the soldier, trained in such a

method as the pupil of such a teacher, to have become a leader in his turn. He finds himself in the actual presence of those formidable problems which he had hitherto envisaged only in thought; how will he solve those problems?

In the first place, the leader must have a plan of operations, and this plan will be directly dependent upon the geographical situation of the belligerents, their separate customs, characters and power. That plan has for its object, of course, victory. And because victory can only be obtained by battle and by the destruction of the enemy's forces, battle is the one object which the chief bears in mind: immediate battle founded upon sudden attack if the general situation is in favour of it; prolonged battle, awaiting better conditions, if the state of one's forces demands such delay.

Knowing what his objective is, the chief must eliminate, in the presence of reality, all hypothesis and even every memory which might obscure his vision of the actual situation in front of him. What *thing* am I handling? What is the *thing* I have to deal with? That is the first question he must set out to answer.

Now that question is a terribly complicated one. The unknown is the very essence of war. Where does the enemy stand? What is his strength? What are his intentions?

There is only one way in which to answer those questions, and they will always be answered most imperfectly. That way is to reconnoitre the enemy in every possible fashion: to complete one's information.

This done, the general must act upon the *precise* information he has obtained, and not upon preconceived ideas or upon hypotheses, which very rarely correspond with reality, however logically one may have framed them. Put thus, this way

of acting seems so natural as to be almost childishly simple; it is none the less very difficult to realize in practice, and the proof is that Moltke himself never learned to carry it out.

For we must appreciate that it is not enough for the various organs of intelligence to gather precise information, difficult as that task is; it is further necessary that such information should reach the chief in time to be *used*—that is, not too late for him to act freely: not too late for him to accept or to provoke a combat if it is presented to him in good conditions, or to refuse it if the conditions are unfavourable.

The instrument guaranteeing such liberty of action, the instrument which Napoleon used and which Moltke never managed to restore, was and is the *General Advance Guard*.

Seeing the great masses which are brought into action to-day, if they are to collaborate in time for battle, this Advance Guard should be strong enough to fix the enemy, once he is in contact with one's cavalry, and oblige him to premature deployment, which will betray, if he is not very careful, the strength of his forces; which will disorganize him and leave him in bad condition for manœuvring the bulk of his army.

That the succeeding events of the action should develop according to the will of the chief, he must make his intentions clear to his subordinates. "Command" never yet meant "obscurity." When every one has been given his direction, each in his own sphere collaborates in the common work. Each feels that a part of the general responsibility is upon him, each feels that the success of the manœuvre in hand in part depends upon his own effort, and this because each knows what the general task is.

The commander cannot think for every one; he cannot immix himself in all details; he cannot lead

every executant by the hand: armies are not manœuvred like pieces upon a chess-board.

We begin, then, with a *doctrine;* that is, a common conception of war. All the brains at work are trained and have a common way of approaching the problems they have to solve. The data of a problem being known, each will solve it after his own manner, but these thousand separate manners will harmoniously diverge towards the common end.

Now suppose action engaged. A leader worthy of the name will, under all circumstances, avoid the *parallel battle.* In this two armies are drawn up in two ever-extending lines facing each other. In such a battle the result, of necessity, depends upon the mere valour or ability of the soldiers; it is at the mercy of any incident, as of a local panic, and the General commanding is deprived of all means of action. He has abdicated his function through ignorance or sloth, and can do nothing to master his fate.

True battle is the *battle of manœuvre* in which, thanks to the forces which the commander has reserved and constituted in such time that they can be usefully employed, thanks also to the judicious application of that fruitful principle "the economy of forces," it is he, and he alone, who will preside over the various phases of the struggle, and will at last be definitely the master of its decision. *Where* he chooses and *when* he chooses he will launch the decisive attack which is the expression of his will, and which alone gives victory.

Battle is the supreme act of war. It should, therefore, be kept in hand fully and thoroughly without room for hesitation. All should take part in it with all their strength and with all the means at their disposal. Therefore, *in the supreme act,*

there should be no strategic reserve; there should be no important bodies left in the rear inactive and wasted while the fate of the war is decided.

Above all, this tremendous drama demands of each one of us not only the complete sacrifice of himself but the very maximum of effort and endurance; he must clearly appreciate that there will come, almost fatally, a certain moment of crisis when the nerves of a force will be strained to their utmost, when human capacity will seem to have reached its limit, and when the dangers and obstacles present will appear insurmountable. That is the moment when we must fall back upon the conception that spirit always dominates matter; that in spite of the most crushing weight of apparent circumstance, in spite of the most formidable effects of the most modern instruments of destruction, it is always (in the long run) the *moral* effort which triumphs over the material one. It is always the spiritual side which impresses the whole.

Victory resides in the will, and a battle won is a battle in which one has not admitted oneself defeated.

Victory always comes to those who merit it by their greater strength of will and of intelligence.

But this unshakable determination on the part of the Chief to achieve victory, all the enthusiasm and all the faith which he himself may possess, would be sterile if he could not communicate them in their entirety to the souls of his soldiers. "For an army is to its commander what a sword is to a man; it has no value save through the impulsion which its bearer gives it. It is the influence of the Command, through the enthusiasm it communicates, that explains those sub-conscious movements in a human mass during those grave moments when, without knowing why, the army opens up

the field of battle and feels itself carried forward as though it were charging down a slope."

Let there be no error on this point: "Generals, not soldiers, win battles; and a general who has been defeated is one who has not understood the task of leadership." The man who wrote this was not Marshal Foch, the victor of the Marne, of the Yser and the Battle of France in 1918; it was Lieutenant-Colonel Foch who signed that challenging definition in 1898.

There is no *conception* more simple nor any in *execution* more terribly difficult than this, which is the very art of war: to learn the enemy's situation, to think matters out, and to will.

To understand the difficulty of this business of "willing," of "knowing how to will"—to get a fairly clear idea of it—it is worth remembering that the lives of many thousand men and the future of a whole country are often bound up in the result of one battle. Remembering this, one can guess what strength of soul is required in a man of warm emotion—a strong patriot—that he should dare to risk a decision. That is why the great Captains of history bear the names of Alexander, Cæsar, Hannibal and Napoleon. That is why, in twenty centuries, we have only produced a half-dozen of them.

Foch was a man of such emotion, of such faith, and of such sense of duty. He made it his business to impress upon his pupils by what means the spiritual forces of an army might be indefinitely increased and rendered capable of passing the supreme test. He said: "In our time, which thinks it can do without ideals, that it can reject what it calls abstractions, and nourish itself on realism, rationalism and positivism; which thinks it can reduce all questions to matters of science or to the employing of more or less ingenious

expedients; at such a time, I say, there is but one resource if you are to avoid disaster, and only one which will make you certain of what course to hold upon a given day. It is the worship—to the exclusion of all others—of two Ideas in the field of morals: duty and discipline. And that worship further needs, if it is to bear fruit and produce results, knowledge and reason."

Foch himself had yet another resource, of which he only spoke once, and that lately, for he knew that it was not obtainable at will. "They are blessed," he said one day, "who are born believers; but they are rare . . ." and he suggested to his audience that faith also is a matter of will, as is strength, and as is instruction.

In 1900, General Bonnal succeeded General Langlois as Commander of the School of War. We have already said that Colonel Foch was a believer: he stood utterly outside the political game; he was entirely absorbed by his great duties as a soldier. His feelings upon this matter were too deep and his emotion too noble to permit him, for any motive whatsoever, to consider even for a moment the admission of any constraint, however small, upon his religious practice.

The period was a troubled one. A brother of the Colonel was a Jesuit. There were some who took alarm at that. There were some who thought it impossible to allow so ardent a Catholic to have the mission of training the officers of the General Staff. In 1901 Colonel Foch was sent back to command a regiment. He left the school in good heart and took up garrison life again.

This eclipse hurt his career but did not interrupt his work; we may even say that the leisure imposed by it was favourable to the growth and ripening of those ideas which have proved so fruitful.

In 1903 he was promoted full Colonel and called to command of the 35th Regiment of Artillery at Vannes.

In 1905 he was the Chief of Staff of the 5th Army Corps at Orleans. In 1907 he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General and summoned to the General Staff of the Army. At that moment General Bonnal had just left the command of the School of War, and the question of his successor was raised.

M. Clemenceau had also at that moment just become Prime Minister. He sent for General Foch, and the following conversation took place between the two men.

"I wish to offer you the command of the School of War."

"Thank you; but doubtless you are not ignorant that one of my brothers is a Jesuit?"

"I know that, and I care nothing for it. You can make good officers, and the rest is of no account."

The next day, therefore, General Foch took on the direction of the School of War.

Convinced as he was that "the art of war" (according to Napoleon's expression) "is a science in which nothing succeeds which has not been calculated and thoroughly thought out"; convinced as he also was that to acquire that complicated science hard work was even more useful than genius, Foch had the good fortune to make people understand that the two years' course in the School of War in Paris could not yield a result comparable to the three years' course of the German Staff-training in the War Academy of Berlin. In spite of opposition to his scheme, he was allowed, by way of experiment, to keep the fifteen best students at the end of their second year for a third year's course, this third year to be given to the study of operations in an army and a group of armies.

This reform would have been well received if it had been applied to all students, but the compromise adopted caused the system to be condemned. The objection was made that the very few officers chosen (by what was, after all, only the chance of an examination) to remain a third year in Paris, would find themselves at the opening of their career specially marked out and designed, as it were, to be Marshals—simply because they had been better at lectures than the rest, or because they were more precocious, or because they happened to have a better memory than their comrades, whose fundamental character and abilities were perhaps superior. Jealousies arose and a certain amount of bitterness. There was also an element of parliamentary intrigue. In a word, this reform, which, had it been fully applied, would certainly have given excellent results, broke down.

General Foch, promoted to be General of Division in 1911, was given the command of the 13th Division at Chaumont; then, in 1912, of the 8th Army Corps, which he left on the 23rd of August, 1913, to take up the command of the 20th Army Corps at Nancy.

II

The General in Command

(*a*)

The 20th Army Corps. Morhange

When the war broke out, it found General Foch at the head of the advance guard covering the frontier.

The 20th Army Corps formed a portion of the army commanded by General Castelnau. From

the 7th of August the whole of this army was in line ready for action, covering Nancy; at Lunéville and Epinal; facing Metz and Château-Salins.

On the 14th of August this army took the offensive. The 20th Corps, which was flanked on the left by the 9th Corps and on the right by the 15th, had for its first objective the heights that mark the frontier. The Germans were strongly entrenched there. After severe losses the resistance of the enemy was overcome, and he retired, evacuating Vic, Moyenvic and Château-Salins. He took up a new position 15 kilometres to the north, marked by the points of Delme, Morhange and Sarrebourg. This position had been organized very strongly and very secretly for some time past, and was abundantly provided with machine-guns and heavy artillery.

That modern heavy artillery, of which General Foch had already foreseen the effect in battle, proved here, as in Belgium and in Luxemburg and in Alsace, the hidden and powerful ally of the German infantry. It was a distant adversary whose blows our soldiers received without being able to reply to them or knowing whence they came; no courage and no cunning could stand against those new means of action.

On the 20th of August the 20th Corps, with its customary gallantry, struck at the heights of Marthil, of Baronville and of Conthil. It had for its task the capture of Morhange and the carrying of Benestroff, the last a nodal point of railways, and therefore of capital importance. It was defended by the army of the Crown Prince of Bavaria, picked troops, equal in number to the French and with far superior weapons.

The losses were very heavy, all the more so because the attack was so desperately pushed.

On the left the 9th Corps, threatened upon its

flank by enemy forces which had come out of Metz, was checked. To the right of it, in the district known as that of "the ponds," the 15th Corps fell back. This retirement uncovered the right flank of the 20th Corps, which was thus exposed to the blows of the 7th German Army.

It would have been folly to have held on; the expected victory had to be abandoned, though everybody thought it certain, and they retired upon the Meuse, which was reached on the 22nd of August.

The situation was critical. The right of the second army would seem to be out of action for some time; the enemy could, therefore, either drive straight on to the Gap of Charmes, through the unoccupied gap which now yawned between the armies of General Dubail and General de Castelnau, or, alternatively, he could bring all his forces to bear against Nancy and achieve the complete annihilation of the second army. Either action would have had the very gravest consequences.

The 20th Corps was tired out, and it had suffered very heavy casualties; but it proved worthy of its chief, and, with this force alone, General Foch retired to cover both Nancy and the Gap of Charmes.

With this object in view, he re-established his troops in a strong and central position to the south of St. Nicolas, where he would find himself upon the flank of either of the two possible directions by which the German columns might advance.

On the east he depended for his information upon the strong advance guard of the 11th Division sent forward into the region of Falinval; on the north he similarly depended upon light infantry, which held Rambêtant, one of the bastions of Nancy.

Of the two alternative roads, it was that of the Gap of Charmes which the invasion chose. Wild with enthusiasm, the Germans drove through Lunéville, exposing their right flank to the 20th

Corps. On the 24th of August, while the enemy was striking against the unshakable resistance of Dubail's army, established upon the Meurthe river, General Foch received the order to take the offensive eastward. On that same day the heights of Sanon were carried: to the north, the wood of Crevic, and to the south, Flainval. On the morrow the whole of de Castelnau's army went forward. Thus, caught in flank and pressed hard in front for two days by the Dubail army, the enemy, in spite of his crushing numerical superiority, hesitated. He was checked and halted. The invasion at this point was mated. Nancy remained free and the Germans never crossed the Meurthe.

(*b*)

The Ninth Army

The Marne

Meanwhile, very serious movements had developed elsewhere, and the higher command had need of General Foch in another theatre of war.

Our armies had proved unable, on the 21st and 22nd of August, to force the enemy's entrenchments in the face of their heavy artillery. General Joffre, abandoning ground wholesale in order to gain in space the time necessary to gather sufficient means of resistance, brought all his armies southward, with the left swinging back on to Paris, with Verdun as pivot.

As early as the 25th of August, in order to provide for the coming battle, he made it his business to gather, in the region of Amiens, a new mass of manœuvre, the 6th Army, which he confided to the command of General Maunoury, and which the development of battle was destined to throw back

under the very walls of Paris. Then, on the 29th of August, when he saw that the continuation of the retreat would open a gap between the armies of Franchet d'Esperey and Langle de Cary, and thus form a weak point which the enemy would try to force, General Joffre decided to constitute in this region a new army—the 9th Army—of which the Commander was to be General Foch.

Summoned urgently to Châlons, Foch arrived at General Headquarters on that same day. He had but just given up the 20th Corps in its moment of victory.

His new army did not yet exist. It had to be formed. It was to consist of the 11th Corps (under General Eydoux), the 52nd and 60th Divisions of Reserve, the 9th Cavalry Division: all these units had been taken from the army of Langle de Cary, which had been retreating from Belgium; there was also the 42nd Division (under General Grossetti), taken from the 6th Corps of Sarrail's army, and therefore coming from Ardennes, and the 9th Corps (General Dubois), taken from the army of de Castelnau. The duty falling upon General Foch at this moment was to gather these elements together, though they were in full retreat, to provide them with munitions and subsistence, and to make of them one homogeneous body capable of once more returning to advance and attack. Meanwhile, he had the further task of thoroughly seizing the general situation. The time was short and the enemy now ardent, pressing our columns closely.

There is an order of General Joffre's, dated the 1st of September, which allows for the holding of the retreating armies upon the line Pont-sur-Yonne–Nogent-sur-Seine–Mery–Arcis-sur-Aube. A further note on the 2nd of September goes so far as to envisage the abandonment of Bar-le-Duc and the falling back of the right as far as Joinville.

There was left to guard Paris the 6th Army, and six territorial divisions.

The German General Staff was now in this quandary. Should it try to force an entry into Paris, or, on the contrary, leave on one side the capital, the heart of France, and devote all its strength to the destruction of the French army?

Paris is a great entrenched camp. If the enemy had attacked it, he would have had to employ for the carrying of it considerable forces which would, therefore, have been lacking on the main battle-field. But if he neglected Paris in order to continue his pursuit of the French Army, he would necessarily at a given moment, as he advanced southward, present his flank to the army of General Maunoury.

It was the second of these two alternatives which took place, and on the 4th of September the German Army fell into the trap. The army of Von Kluck, covering itself on its right, towards Paris, with no more than a single army corps, turned to the south-east with the object of outflanking the army of Franchet d'Esperey. At the same time, the armies of Bulow and Hausen, a mass of nearly 300,000 men, poured upon Epernay and Châlons and made for Sézanne in order to break the French front between the armies of Franchet d'Esperey and Langle de Cary. The German Higher Command believed that it would find in this gap no elements of sufficient strength.

On the 5th of September, at midday, Maunoury's army of the 6th, launched by the violent ardour of Gallieni, fell upon the flank of Von Kluck, and opened the battle eighteen hours too early, eighteen hours before the moment chosen by the Commander-in-Chief, which moment had been fixed at six o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, the 6th of September. Orders were sent out along the whole line to cease the retreat, to hold and to take the

offensive—Joffre's final order of the day upon that occasion could not be read, in most units, until after the victory. General Foch transported his headquarters to Fleurs, a point from which he could easily overlook action towards Sezanne and La Fère-Champenoise.

It was his business to stop three great avenues of advance for the enemy upon a front of thirty-five thousand yards; the road from (1) Epernay to Sezanne, and (2) to La Fère-Champenoise, and (3) that from Châlons to Arcis-sur-Aube. Further, it was his business to hold on to the plateaux north of Sezanne, which offered a point of resistance for the right of the Franchet d'Esperey army, and to protect that army against an outflanking movement. Above all, he had to prevent the enemy from debouching to the south of the marshes of St. Gond.

The 42nd Division went up to hold the heights of Sézanne, a special honour granted to a body of troops of chosen merit. The Moroccan Division of the 9th Corps held the avenues of egress from the marshes of St. Gond. This latter was a hard task because the marshes were then nearly dry, and it was the Prussian Guard which had the task of attacking. The 11th Corps was ordered to check in the plain below the German masses driving forward from Châlons. The 9th Cavalry Division covered the right flank of the army at the camp of Mailly.

All these units combined could not put into line more than 70,000 combatants.

Two men to the yard is little indeed to check in open country the effort of 300,000 men who thought themselves already victorious. Napoleon counted five men to the yard for the delivery of an attack. The Germans could here count on ten. General Foch could only hold at his disposal the 52nd and

60th Divisions of Reserve in his attempt to turn the approaching struggle into a battle of manœuvre such as he had himself taught and conceived. It was a very feeble instrument for so great a task.

On the 6th of September Foch was ordered to support upon his left the offensive of Franchet d'Esperey, and all the rest of his front to hold the enemy in order to afford time for the neighbouring armies to pass to the attack. Therefore, on his left the 42nd Division, led by the gallant Grossetti, attacked, and the 10th Army Corps clung to Soizy and Villeneuve, which last place was twice lost and twice retaken; at the end of the struggle this corps was still holding an enemy far superior in numbers, and night only put an end to the butchery upon that blood-stained height, lit by the flames of the burning farms.

But on the extreme right it had proved necessary to send the 60th Reserve Division to support the 11th Corps, which, after being outflanked by two German Corps, was retiring. Thus uncovered on its right, the 9th Corps, which was trying to hold on the north of the marshes of St. Gond, had to retire in its turn, and to be supported by the 52nd Division of the Reserve, in order to hold the points south of the marshes, whereby the enemy might debouch. By this time all the forces of the 9th Army were engaged in a very heavy struggle, and General Foch had no further troops at his disposal.

Nevertheless, on the 7th of September his general instructions remained the same as they did before. On the left an offensive, which was pursued in touch with the 5th Army: everywhere else a desperate defensive, waiting its moment to pass to the offensive. Under the bombardment of the German heavy artillery, the 47th Division, the 52nd Reserve Division and the Moroccan Division, far from being able to go forward, could

only hold their positions at the expense of heroic efforts, and the German masses pushed forward in great waves, in spite of very heavy losses, without respite. This storm did not disturb the attitude of Foch. His common sense, which the enormity of the business seemed to render only more clear, judged the situation thus:

"Since they are trying to break through *here* at such a price, it is evident that their fortunes are going ill elsewhere."

He used these words precisely at the moment when the 4th German Corps was being withdrawn from the region of Rebais and sent on to the Ourcq to check the outflanking movement of Maunoury: precisely at the moment when the English Army, disengaged by this retreat, passed from the defensive to the offensive in the region of Coulommiers: at the precise moment when the tide of the invasion had turned.

It was upon the 8th of September, then, that the German Higher Command understood victory by envelopment to be escaping it. It held on, and still tried to achieve its object by checking Maunoury on the right, and sending powerful reinforcements (so as to burst through the army of Foch) to Bulow and Hausen. It was an effort at achieving a strategic rupture, or breach of the line, in place of the envelopment which had failed. Such a rupture would have given the Germans victory as thoroughly as would an envelopment. But that attempt at a breach failed in its turn.

During all that day, the 8th of September, the struggle was continued with extreme violence. On the left, Franchet d'Esperey disengaged the 42nd Division by powerfully thrusting forward the whole of his 10th Corps. But on the right the 11th Corps, crushed under the weight of forces double its own, and broken by the fire of the German

heavy artillery, was yielding. It had very heavy losses. It abandoned La Fère Champenoise, and the 60th Division retired, broken, on to Maille.

In the centre the 9th Corps, which was further taken in reverse, also gave way. The Prussian Guard was very near Mondement, and if Mondement were carried the 9th Army would be cut in two. It was but midday, and the enemy still had many hours before him in which to reap the fruits of a victory which appeared certain.

But Foch, while he was still a Colonel and teaching in the School of War, had laid it down in his lectures that a battle was not lost until one was persuaded in one's own mind that it was lost. And though the General carried his headquarters back to Plancy (because the advancing German fire had begun to interrupt the working of his services), he so little believed in the enemy's victory that he sent to the General Commander-in-Chief the following laconic report—

"I am heavily pressed upon my right; my centre is giving way; I cannot re-distribute my forces. The situation is excellent and I shall attack."

This has been called an epigram, but it is nothing of the kind. While he was listening at the telephone, chewing his cigar and receiving the alarming dispatches which came in from all sides, he followed in thought the progress of the offensive then being conducted by Maunoury on the Ourcq and those of Marshal French and Franchet d'Esperey on the Petit Morin. It was his business to hold: to hold at all costs: for "victory falls to those who deserve it by the greater mass of will." And, because "the feebler one is the more one should attack," he gave orders to those troops of his—now dazed with fatigue—to turn and go forward. Supported by D'Esperey's Army, the 42nd Division gained ground. On every other point of his front

there was no advance, but the enemy, bewildered by this new movement, halted, and the essential positions were held up to nightfall.

In the evening of that day, the 8th of September, in view of the next day's task, which would probably be still harder, General Foch asked for aid from the Fifth Army. General Franchet d'Esperey readily put at his disposal the whole of the 10th Corps and the 51st Reserve Division.

The 42nd Division, after the three days of most unequal struggle which it had maintained, seemed physically unable to support another day of equal trial, excellent though its moral still remained. On the 8th of September, at dawn, it was relieved in the first line by the 51st Reserve Division, while the 10th Corps was given the task of attacking the 10th German Corps in flank.

On their side Bulow and Hausen, upon the early morning of this 9th of September, reopened their attacks with the same violence as upon the day before. The whole line was heavily engaged; the Prussian Guard, 7th, 10th and 12th active German Corps, and the 10th and 12th Reserve Corps, all went forward together for the final attack.

Our men put up a determined resistance. On the left our 10th Corps went forward; but in the centre even the heroic sacrifices of the Moroccan Division did not prevent the Prussian Guard from carrying Mondement and reaching the outskirts of Allemant. As early as nine o'clock in the morning, under a hail of heavy shell, the 11th Corps began to fall back full 4000 yards towards Corroy, and the 60th Reserve Division abandoned Mailly. It was clear that the limit of human endurance upon our side had been reached. If the enemy still had an effort left in him he would pierce our centre, and his general situation, which was badly compromised upon the Ourcq, would

be re-established in the marshes of Saint Gond. But the enemy was fairly exhausted. His attack was beginning to weaken; his foremost waves of men were hesitating. His supporting columns were less dense. They no longer secured an advance. They were beginning to take cover against the storms of our field artillery, and our men, calling on their last reserves of energy, just held, hiding in the shell-craters and firing the last of their cartridges.

The critical moment was appearing. "The battle was ripe," to quote Napoleon's expression; or again, according to Foch's own formula, victory would go "to that one of the two adversaries who had kept the last reserve battalion to throw into the furnace when his opponent had none."

Now the Germans had no more troops available; *but on our side one reserve remained and was on the march.* This supreme reserve was the 42nd Division, which, withdrawn exhausted from the firing line that same morning, was now coming up to a place assigned to it between Linthes and Pleurs. It was tired out; it was greatly reduced in numbers; it would certainly not have stood against another attack. But at any rate it was at the General's disposal. Its march down behind the lines had relieved it somewhat from the violent tension of the prolonged struggle; its moral was high, *and it had all the vigour required for attacking upon its own account.*

It received the order to go forward, with the right flank of the 12th German Corps as its objective. That right flank had now passed Connantre, and it was at this point that the junction between Bulow and Hausen lay.

The execution of this manœuvre—striking at the enemy point of junction, in flank, with the French 42nd Corps—was slow on account of the extreme

fatigue of the troops. They had barely had a half-day's interval after three days and three nights of terrible struggle; they had not had the time to recover themselves, even temporarily. At the moment when the order to go forward was given the last elements of the 42nd Division had not even yet arrived at Linthes. Only the greatest generals are able to obtain from large bodies of men these paroxysms of effort; and to obtain them at all the commander must (in Foch's own terms) "know how to communicate the supreme energy which animates his own self to the masses of men who form his army." You will find hardly any other example so thoroughly characteristic of this, outside the campaign of France in 1814, conducted under the very eye of Napoleon.

It is but 4000 yards from Linthes to Connantre. It was not till about six o'clock in the evening, after four hours of mortal anguish in which men felt that the fate of France was in the balance, that the 42nd Division came fully into line.

During this interval General Foch, who had thrown his last cards upon the table but who now counted securely upon victory, got on his horse and took a ride with Lieutenant Ferrasson. During this ride he talked with his companion upon certain points of philosophy and of economics wherein he took interest.

Napoleon slept two hours on the battlefield of Bautzen while awaiting the decision of his fate. Foch upon this occasion did not sleep, but he gave his brain a rest and left his battle on one side, though the cannonade was loud during all that ride.

When the General came back to his headquarters at Plancy he heard that the 42nd Division was now arrived and deployed and ready to attack. He immediately gave orders for the whole line to go forward.

The order was obeyed. The whole situation changed. The army of Hausen, which thought itself on the threshold of victory and believed the French to be exhausted, was taken aback by the apparition of new opposing forces—the 42nd. Our shells began to fall upon La Fère Champenoise, where the Germans were unharnessing their supply teams in the certitude of victory. Those teams were hurriedly re-harnessed and the horses' heads were turned northwards.

All along that line the enemy began to take to ground. He began to dig. In patches here and there he could not even dig, he retired. There was a wind of defeat upon him; and when the night checked our advance our soldiers knew well that with the dawn they would see the retreat of their opponents.

During the night that retreat began.

On the 10th of September, at five in the morning, our lines went forward, and no more resistance was attempted. They gathered their trophies, masses of material, and here and there, especially at La Fère Champenoise itself, which had been precipitately evacuated, they picked up officers and soldiers of the Prussian Guard as drunk as helots.

The first serious attempt at resistance was made by the enemy upon the line Morains–Normée–Lenharrée–Sommesous. To get the better of that rearguard it was necessary to wait for the artillery. By nightfall General Foch had brought his headquarters forward to La Fère Champenoise itself.

On the 11th of September the 9th Army reached the Marne, between Epernay and Châlons.

On the 15th the enemy reached the Aisne, taking up a strong defensive position to the north of Rheims and of the Châlons training-camp. He had received new provision of munitions and strong reinforcements.

The task of the first days after establishing this contact was to hold him and to throw back his vigorous counter-attacks. To conquer him in such positions we should have needed, and would need for a long time to come, many more guns and their munitionment. Victory against so strong an organization, held by very numerous, brave and powerfully-weaponed troops, could only be obtained at such a price. It would have been madness to try and force the lines by mere weight of men. Whether we would or no, therefore, the struggle stabilised upon this point. Already the interest of the war had been transferred to another, more northern, field.

(*c*)

The Group of the Armies of the North. The Yser.

The French and German General Staffs had both discovered that a breach of the opposing front was for the moment impossible to either of them, and that the decision of the battle which had been engaged could only be sought by outflanking. Switzerland was forbidden as neutral ground. For each of the opposing forces the only vulnerable flank was the western one. Therefore their activity must be directed to sliding their forces westward, at the risk of perilously denuding the rest of their fronts.

On the 20th of September the whole of Castelnau's army had been brought from Alsace and detrained in the region of Beauvais. It came up in time to hold, near Roye, the new advance of the German masses upon Paris.

On the 30th the army of Maud'huy detrained in the region of Arras, and its forces also arrived in time to break, even as it detrained, the shock of 300,000 Germans.

On the 4th of October a call on the telephone, without any preliminary, gave General Foch to know that he had been nominated to a command under the Commander-in-Chief, and charged with the task of co-ordinating the operations of the whole group of French armies in the north.

There were then in that region the armies of Castelnau and Maud'huy (the 6th and 10th), the group of Territorial divisions of General Brugère (four divisions), and the two cavalry corps of Conneau and De Mitry.

There was no need for ampler instructions. Foch knew the general situation well, it was a simple one, and the difficulties of execution could only be discovered upon the field of action itself. There only can the problems of war be stated and solved.

He left Châlons at ten in the evening, and at four o'clock the next morning he was at Breteauil with General de Castelnau. A heavy cannonade was in progress, dispatches were arriving every five minutes that the 5th and 6th Divisions and the 4th Army Corps were supporting a very severe struggle against the 17th Active German Corps, the 17th Reserve German Corps, the 21st German Corps, and the 1st Bavarian Corps. The moral of the troops was excellent; reinforcements were expected; the Paris road was well defended. Moreover, the enemy was passing his reserves northward. His real object was to pin down our disposable forces in a position covering Paris rather than to break our line. What he really had in mind was our left flank.

The two Generals held their discussion on the situation as they took their coffee. At six o'clock in the morning General Foch took a warm farewell of the man who had been his commander of yesterday and was to-day commanded by him. Then, as he followed the road to Saint Pol, his motor-car ran along and behind the whole length of the battle,

the great rumour of which stretched out indefinitely northward. By nine o'clock in the morning he had reached Aubigny, where General de Maud'huy had taken up his post of command. Here, also, the battle was in full blast. The extreme left of our line barely reached the region of Lens. The 10th Corps, the 10th Cavalry Division, and the 70th Reserve Division, were holding the violent attack of German battalions which continued to detrain behind this field. Towards Lille, Conneau's Cavalry Corps was alone upon the watch, but as yet there was no enemy in front of it.

By the next day, the 6th of October, General Foch, having now fully taken his bearings, set up his headquarters at Doullens. For the moment his principal business was to hasten by every means at his disposal the railway and motor traffic and vehicles of every kind, to transport towards the north the troops and material which General Headquarters were taking from all the rest of the front and pouring ceaselessly towards this end of the line. It was also his task to see to the strength of the wall which was containing the invasion, and to hold himself ready to close immediately any breach which might appear in that wall.

Simple as such a general conception was, its execution became very difficult from the fact that Marshal French had asked that the British Army should be brought nearer its base and transported to the region of Lille. Instead of French troops, four British Army Corps were thus to prolong the left of our line.

General Foch, who had formerly been at the head of a Military Mission in London, knew the English well. He knew that their forces, heroic in courage and highly tenacious, were as yet ill adapted to the necessities of action under heavy strain, where rapidity of movement is an essential condition of

success. Further, how would the British Staff, which had hitherto no experience in such things, solve the peculiar problem of rapid transport? Would there not also arise in the exercise of a command, the exact limits of which were ill-defined, no actual friction, perhaps, but misunderstandings, and therefore delays?

In spite of these considerations the British began to detrain on the 9th of October, and our cavalry which was covering them had not yet given evidence of the presence of any Germans before it.

But it was precisely upon that day that there took place an event of considerable importance, the approach of which had been envisaged for some time.

Antwerp, the enormous fortress which was the keep of the Belgian defence, fell under the 17-inch shells of the enemy.

The German Command having committed the error of launching the attack at the very first moment without having previously made certain the complete containment of the place, especially on the left bank of the Scheldt, the Belgian Army was able to retire, and retreated towards the Yser. To cover this retreat General Foch sent forward by rail, at top speed, from Dunkerque towards Ghent, Admiral Ronarch's brigade of marine fusiliers. When its task was accomplished this brigade fell back upon Dixmude, where it had to serve as a support for the right of the Belgian Army, which was to fall back behind the Yser.

Two of our Territorial Divisions were at this moment rapidly digging trenches round Ypres. This point of resistance was to be occupied by an English division, which had been sent too late to the relief of Antwerp, and which was at Ostend, where it had just disembarked. When the English reached Ypres these two French Territorial Divisions, with certain other Anglo-French elements, leaned

to the north, to help the Belgian Army defend the sector Ypres-Dixmude. But from the south of Ypres, all the way to La Bassée, there opened a breach of some 30,000 yards, utterly unprovided with troops, and only watched by our cavalry patrols. Should the German army released by the fall of Antwerp present itself on that side the situation might become difficult.

Happily for us, the German Higher Command, doubtless uninformed about the exact situation in front of Lille, full of contempt for the Belgian Army and making certain of its complete destruction, took for its objective the front of the Yser, now solidly occupied between Dixmude and the sea.

The charge was delivered on the 13th of October. The 12th, 13th and 15th German Corps and their 17th Corps of Reserve drove on in deep columns, singing the "Deutschland über Alles," confident of a victory without combat. These units were of recent formation, recruited from the younger men—the choice, indeed, of the Prussian youth, but knowing nothing of war and barely efficient as yet in mere drill. They were, none the less, filled with all the illusions of the pan-German.

The result was a fearful massacre, which was renewed day after day without respite on the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th of October. At every point the Belgian Army, supported by certain French elements, held good under the bombardment of the heavy artillery, and the bloody sacrifice of the German Army achieved not the slightest advantage. At the same moment, and with equally ill success, the 19th Corps assaulted the sector of Ypres after a violent bombardment, and broke in its turn against the unshakable resistance of the British troops.

Now while this battle was in full activity towards the north, the weak part of the front was being rapidly garnished. By the 17th of October four

British corps had already detrained entirely, and the gap between Ypres and Cambrai was closed to the enemy.

At this moment the weakest part of the northern front was the sector between Ypres and Dixmude, because the bringing up of the English had caused a delay in our own detraining in this region. But a powerful reinforcement was to arrive here also, under the command of General D'Urbal, who had been appointed upon the 20th of October. Upon the 22nd of October the 9th Corps, upon the 1st of November the 16th and the 32nd, arrived. Day and night trains and motor lorries were passing up north behind the line of fire and were discharging upon the points chosen by General Foch their precious loads of energy, while in front of the movement the cannon thundered and shook the soil, and whole villages disappeared under the heavy shelling.

The officers of the staff who served under the orders of General Foch during this period are unanimous in declaring that it was his talent and his will which achieved all, and his activity which animated all. Incredible difficulties kept on presenting themselves and were overcome, one hardly knew how. Was heavy artillery needed at a certain point? It was found and brought thither. Was a battalion needed here, a brigade there? That battalion and that brigade came to the desired point at the desired moment. Units detrained in the night were sent forward on lorries, re-entrained without one's knowing how they would arrive, or whether they had been fed. They came and were there at the designated point to check the enemy. Parallel with this crushing task, the General had another task to fulfil, which was perhaps more difficult. He had to keep up the moral of our allies, upon whom the weakness of our means of defence was making

as strong an impression as the strength and determination of the enemy.

On the 20th of October, in the night between the 20th and the 21st, and during the 21st, we passed those long hours of anguish when Dixmude was crushed with shell and when the Germans, whose effectives were perpetually reinforced, pressed with greater fury than ever upon the Belgian lines and ended by bending them. Keyem and Beerst were carried by the enemy; the Belgian Army had put in its last reserves; it was exhausted and short of munitions. The line of the Yser was on the point of being forced, and the General Staff had begun to envisage the execution of a retreat on Dunkerque. That would have spelt disaster.

Foch learnt of this by telephone and came up at once. He happened to arrive in the midst of a council of war in which our brave allies, upon the point of despair, were discussing the last dispositions to be taken.

He did no more than indicate a line to which the forces might fall back—and then suggested the idea of flooding the country.

Inundation had saved Holland at another period of history; it might well save Belgium. No one had thought of it. Now it was determined to hold on as best could be done until the country should be flooded. Moreover, at this moment the 42nd Division, that which we have already seen upon the marshes of Saint Gond, appeared. It counter-attacked, and again fixed the German line. The General, to show his fixed determination to force a victory here, took up his headquarters on the 24th of October as far forward northward as Cassel.

On the 28th the plain to the east of the Yser, the German trenches and batteries, and the whole landscape began to disappear under a sheet of water. The enemy would be bound to retire, but before

doing so he was to make one supreme effort against this army, which he felt to be at the end of its strength, and whose ruin would give him the coast which he so ardently desired. On the 30th he attacked in deep columns against the Belgian centre, after a heavy artillery bombardment.

Ramscappelle was carried, the centre was pierced, the German victory seemed assured. But the 42nd Division was still there, and by a brilliant bayonet charge it mastered the scattered and reduced columns of the enemy, which fell back, this time never to return. The German retreat was conducted through water. Its heavy guns were caught in the mud and lost. It even found difficulty in dragging its field-pieces with it through the slime. The Belgian Army was saved.

On this same 30th of October the British 1st Corps was violently attacked in front of Dixmude by considerable enemy effectives. Under the crushing preparation of the German heavy artillery and flooded by the mass of the attack, it weakened. But were it to retreat the flank of our own 9th Corps would be exposed.

General Dubois sent in aid of our allies the feeble resources at his disposal, and himself asked for reinforcements. Foch went immediately to Saint Omer, where Marshal French had his headquarters. It was one o'clock in the morning and the Marshal had just gone to bed. He was awakened, and General Foch said to him—

"Monsieur le Maréchal, your line is pierced."

"Yes," was the answer.

"Have you any forces disponible at the moment?"

"I have not."

"I bring you mine. General Joffre has sent me eight battalions. Take them and go forward."

The Field Marshal took the hand of General Foch with some emotion and thanked him, and with dawn

the struggle began again, supported by this new blood.

On that same day, the 31st of October, the enemy, thanks to his crushing numerical superiority, carried Gheluvelt and threatened Hooge. At two o'clock in the afternoon the last English reserves, decimated and exhausted, began to yield, and it looked like the end.

General Dubois, whose army corps would have been involved in the disaster, came up to Vlamertinghe, the post of command of General D'Urbal. General Foch was there. The situation was terrible, but clear. It was essential to hold out twenty-four hours, the time necessary for the 16th and 32nd Corps to arrive and detrain.

By a providential piece of luck the motor-car of Marshal French passed at the moment of this meeting, and an officer of the General Staff, Major Jamet, ran forward towards him. The Marshal, hearing that General Foch was present, agreed to stop.

But now he was without hope. His last reserves had melted away in the furnace of the battle, his divisions were quite worn out, decimated and shaken. They were no longer capable of any prolonged resistance, there was nothing left but to die.

Foch replied, " No, Monsieur le Maréchal. The first thing of all to do is to hold out at all costs. Dying can come afterwards. Hold out till this evening. I will come to your aid."

Even as he spoke, since the Marshal was not fully familiar with French, the General wrote on the back of the order of retreat which the British Staff had drawn up what should be done in order to prolong the resistance. He presented these notes to the Marshal, but the latter was not yet convinced. Foch continued, " If Wellington's infantry will no longer hold, to-day, entrenched, my lads will have to go." Marshal French replied that it would hold,

and taking his order to retreat, he crossed it out, turned it, and wrote at the foot of Foch's notes these few words, which he signed: "Execute the order of General Foch." For the rest, the day was not over before a French brigade came up in line and helped to check the progress of the enemy.

It was thus at every point in the line. The unshakable will, the faith of the General, communicated to all, roused courage and multiplied energy, while his clear and sure grasp of a situation and his gift of discovery warded off danger at the moment when all seemed lost. Every one felt, as it were, that his reserves sprang from the earth at the very moment and place where their intervention was indispensable.

On the 1st of November the 1st Bavarian Corps captured Messines. Immediately a detachment of cavalry and artillery was formed, under General Mazel, and was brought up. On the 2nd of November a battle was engaged between Dixmude and the River Lys, for the Germans were ending their task at the point where they should have begun it. From that date up to the 15th of November they struck against a wall now strong enough not to be shaken by their battering-ram. They launched in dense columns their 2nd, the 13th, the 15th and the 17th Corps, a Bavarian Corps, and a division of the Guard.

On the 3rd came the furious attack on Ypres. The French 20th Army Corps was brought up in lorries, and the assault was checked.

The following week was a week of butchery. The savage struggle ceased neither day nor night. The Marines, the 8th and 9th Territorial Divisions, certain units of cavalry and of cyclists, the 32nd Corps, recently detrained, contested violently and under the most difficult conditions, with the 12th and 13th German Reserve Corps, for the possession of Dixmude, the Château of Woumen, Merckem and Bixchoote.

Dixmude had been captured from our Marines

by the enemy as early as the 1st of November at a very heavy loss. At the same time Bixchoote was carried; and the salient of Ypres, in front of which our 16th Corps was holding the 26th German Corps, was on the point of being taken in reverse. But Foch was on his guard. Napoleon made war with the legs of his soldiers; here the genius for manœuvre used with equal ease the rapid means of transport at his disposal, and the 22nd Brigade, one of the Brigades of the famous "Division of Iron," was on the spot with two cavalry corps; and the enemy, having missed his victory once more, fell back.

That was the end. Their wild efforts had cost the Germans 300,000 men. Those efforts could not be renewed.

General Foch knew well that his victory was a purely negative one. Victory in the full sense of the word demands the destruction of the enemy by a violent pursuit. But the effectives at his disposal were far too inferior to those of his adversary, and, above all, he had too little heavy artillery with which to reply to the big pieces of the enemy.

It was a negative victory, but a victory none the less, and a great one. In spite of a formidable deployment of eleven army corps and the admission of incalculable losses, the enemy had proved unable either to outflank us on the left, or to attain Calais, or to pierce our line, though that line had but barely crystallized. General Foch, by his activity, his astonishing grip of a position, his indomitable energy, and his effect upon our allies, had brilliantly and definitely confirmed the results of the first victory which had checked the enemy at the Marne.

(*d*) *The Artois and the Somme*

Hardly had the last cannon shots on the Yser died down when the situation on the whole of our

front was profoundly modified. The enemy, who had by this time made up his mind to turn his main effort against Russia, went to earth in Flanders and in the Artois, as he had already gone to earth in the Somme, Champagne, the Argonne and Lorraine.

His numerical superiority being still beyond question and his material incomparably more powerful than our own, we also had to entrench to guard against a new push and to be able to recreate our forces with some sort of security in view of a renewal of the offensive. The winter of 1914–15 was, therefore, a period of intense but ungrateful labour for General Foch and his staffs, which labour had for its object the transport and accumulation of material upon the scale of which no one in the past had had any conception. An incredible number of trains ceaselessly followed each other upon the tracks, carrying mountains of building material (corrugated iron, armoured plates, rolls of wire, both smooth and barbed, and piquets of wood); of military material (guns of all calibres by the thousand, pyramids of shell and munitions of every kind, of which the last operations had shown how necessary it was to consume very great quantities, and navvying and entrenching tools by the million). Finally, there was the necessity for special provisionment in food and clothing and coal, due to the winter season which had already begun.

It was also a period of extreme strain for the troops, who had to dig night and day at their trenches in the frozen mud, often with water up to their knees, and in despite of the weather and of the enemy's heavy artillery, which often destroyed in a few minutes the intensive labour of several days.

There were also not a few sharp engagements, of which the object was to hold the enemy upon our front in order to prevent him sending as many men

as he would against our Russian allies, and to keep up among our own troops the " bite " and offensive spirit which are indispensable to active operations. The names of these episodes are St. George, the Ferryman's House, the Kortekar Inn, Dixmude and Ypres again, Vermelles, Carency, Andechy. These were our feats of arms in November and December 1914.

Our British allies took for their part their full share of these struggles, under the personal influence of General Foch and in spite of the insufficiency of the means as yet at their disposal. On the 26th of January, 1915, they engaged in a glorious struggle at Givenchy, and on the 10th of March they carried Neuve Chapelle.

None the less, the inferiority of our material means was such that these winter operations were unable to prevent the enemy, confidently relying upon the inviolability of his defensive organization, from taking 150,000 men from the Western front and inflicting a grave defeat upon the Russian Army in the region of the Masurian Lakes.

But by the spring the results of our labour became appreciable, and when the Russian Higher Command let us know that it was about to undertake an offensive in Galicia we were nearly ready to support it efficiently, and General Foch was able to consider the organization of an attack in the Artois. He transported his headquarters from Cassel to Frévent, on the road between Saint Pol and Doullens, in order to be in the centre of his theatre of operations; for he had decided to take as his objective the last bastions of the Artois hills which separate Arras from the plains of the north. Beyond this barrier lay Lens, with its mines and its junction of railways, and beyond also lay Lille and Douai. It was a vital point for the enemy.

The means put at the disposal of the General were still very inferior. He refused to calculate the

breadth of his attacking front on the basis of the number of soldiers he could put into line. He would only accept as the foundation of his estimate the number of heavy pieces which he was given. Now of these very large guns, in spite of all the efforts that had been made, we still had few, while the enemy had many, and in order to obtain that superiority of artillery fire which the General thought necessary for victory the zone of attack had to be very restricted. He therefore prepared to attack upon a front of only 10,000 yards, between Neuville-Saint-Vaast and Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

On the 9th of May a formidable artillery preparation destroyed the powerful defensive organizations of the enemy and opened the way to our waves of attack. The Germans concentrated their defensive on a number of strongly organized supporting points: Ablain-Saint-Nazaire, Carency, La Targette, Neuville-Saint-Vaast, and the celebrated "Labyrinth," which was a complicated network of trenches, cemented dug-outs and lines of barbed wire. In spite of the constant aid of the artillery which delivered several hundred thousand shells a day, and of which the fire was minutely controlled by our airmen, the progress across these underground works and open fields, where every obstacle hid some trap, was very slow. On the 19th of June the objectives first assigned by General Foch were reached. We were the masters of Neuville-Saint-Vaast, of the "Labyrinth," of Carency, of Souchez, and of the spur of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. On the 10,000 yards front of the attack we had advanced 3000 yards, we had captured 8000 prisoners and a score of cannon, and had held sixteen German divisions for a space of two months.

It was a victory. But in spite of all the science, all the efforts and all the heroism laid out upon it, it had no decisive character. It had flattened out

a salient in the German line, but the door thus opened was too narrow to take effectives through in sufficient number : the forces advancing through it would very soon have been caught in reverse if they had ventured into the plain beyond. But this fine military episode had yielded lessons of high value. In the first place, it was now clear that local offensives on a narrow scale were powerless to procure victory. In order to obtain an appreciable result it would be necessary to give a greater development to the front of attack; and since the breadth of the sector of attack is a function in terms of the heavy guns one can put into line, it was obviously necessary to intensify yet further the manufacture of material and munitions.

Further, it was essential not to leave the enemy free to use his reserves as he would. Thanks to his central position, he could always be superior to his assailant in any given place, whence the necessity of bringing about important offensives *simultaneously* upon all fronts, through obtaining from our allies an *intensification* of their effort, at any rate, even if we had to wait for the power of attaining *unity of command* over the war.

On the 7th of July the first reunion at Chantilly brought together at French headquarters representatives of all the armies of the Entente, under the presidency of General Joffre. A decision was taken to attempt offensives in which the English and Belgian Armies should join upon the Western front in order to relieve the Russian front. These offensives were delivered upon the 25th of September in Champagne and in the Artois. The Champagne front had been weakened by the enemy, to the advantage of his Russian front. The Germans suffered a defeat there which cost them 20,000 prisoners, and might have been decisive had we had more material.

In the Artois the attack was delivered on much the same ground as that of May, and with the same objectives: the last bastions of the hills of the Artois, which we already held, Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, which dominates the plain of Lens. The enemy's Higher Command was perhaps preparing an offensive in this region, for enemy reserves had already accumulated there, with superior material to ours, and after the first success gained by our troops at Souchez, and by the British at Loos and Hulluch, we were compelled to halt by the powerful counter-attacks and the formidable array of heavy artillery on the enemy's side. Thanks, however, to the exact co-ordination of our efforts, the object aimed at was attained on this occasion; the German offensive launched against Russia was checked, and the situation of our allies in Galicia was re-established.

These operations, small as were their results, had proved that it was possible to co-ordinate the efforts of all the allies effectively. To mould opinion in this direction the French Government took an initiative: on the 2nd of December General Joffre was made Generalissimo of the French Armies in all the theatres of war, and General de Castelnau the Chief of his General Staff. This measure strengthened the character of the French Command, but did not produce upon our allies the effect it was expected to do. The conclusions of the further meetings which took place at Chantilly on the 6th, 7th and 8th of December, the object of which was to lay down a plan for the operations of 1916, remained rather vague. There was some question of a general offensive to be launched on all fronts as soon as that was possible, and meanwhile a local offensive undertaken mainly by the British, Italian and Russian Armies, which had hitherto suffered less than the French.

The work of examining, studying and preparing the front in view of the projected offensive which General Foch furnished during this disappointing period cannot be analyzed here. Later we shall see the result of these studies, and we shall see how the General found means, when his hour had come, to apply the Napoleonic art, compact of energy and grasp, in spite of the momentary triumph of mere material strength.

In execution of the conclusions come to at Chantilly, the preparations of the Entente made active progress. The British effort was intensified, some Russian units, even, appeared upon the Western front. By reducing its effectives in line the Higher French Command built up a " mass of manœuvre " of thirty-seven Divisions.

At the end of the inter-allied discussions the Somme was chosen as the theatre for the great offensive envisaged. General Foch, who had moved his headquarters to Dury in September, had long been preparing that offensive in all its details. Forty French and twenty British divisions were to be put at his disposal. His plan of attack was approved on the 14th of February, 1916. The offensive was to be delivered to the north and to the south of the Somme river on a front of 25,000 yards, between Chaulnes and Gomécourt. Nothing remained to be settled by the Higher Command but the date of the attack. That date was to coincide with Russian and Italian offensives, and with the recall from Egypt of certain British troops.

Meanwhile, on the 21st of February, the Germans struck against Verdun with very formidable apparatus, and in five days ruined all the northern defences of that entrenched camp. In the following days they developed and intensified to the last degree of energy their offensive upon this sector,

and with every passing day it appeared more and more clearly as a decisive operation.

A new conference between the Allies, which met on the 12th of March, decided that it was necessary to hasten the execution of the offensives already settled in order to relieve Verdun. Hence, the Russian Army was to be ready to attack by the 15th of May, the Anglo-French and the Italians by the 1st of June.

But Verdun gradually absorbed all our reserves. On the 15th of April General Foch was warned that instead of the forty French divisions promised him for his battle he could no longer count on more than thirty. On the 15th of May we could only allow him twenty-six. Happily, British reinforcements had already arrived, and when the time came the General was able to dispose of twenty-six English divisions instead of twenty.

On the 1st of June our allies were not ready, and the operation was postponed until the 29th. For Verdun could still hold in spite of all the efforts of the German Army.

Meanwhile, the Higher Italian Command, finding itself menaced by an Austrian offensive which it doubted its power to check, asked Russia to undertake an offensive on her side for its relief. The battle which was still raging at Verdun now awoke at once on the Russian and the Italian fronts. It was a unique occasion for realizing by a great offensive on the Somme the maximum co-ordination of effort which had yet been obtained in the course of this war.

On the 1st of July, after a terrible bombardment which flattened out the German trenches, a vigorous attack was launched between Frise and Estrées, facing Peronne, on a front of 6000 yards. At the first bound the enemy's first positions were carried and our soldiers brought back 5000 prisoners. The

effort continued throughout the succeeding days, each stage carefully prepared and the whole proceeding like clockwork. On the 2nd of July the second German position was breached by the capture of Frise and Herbecourt. On the 3rd Biscourt, Flaucourt and Assevillers fell, and on the 4th Barleux, Belloy-en-Santerre, and Estrees. By the 10th the number of prisoners had reached 10,000, seventy-five guns had been taken, and the plain of Peronne was dominated from Briaches, while the important railway junction of Roisel was under our fire at a range of 10,000 yards.

On the 14th of July, according to the common programme and after a bombardment which had lasted since the 11th, the British Army went forward in its turn on a front of 6000 yards. It carried with fine dash Bazentin, Longueval, and the woods Trone and Delville, breaking the resistance of the first and second German lines and capturng 2000 prisoners. By the 17th our allies, who were now fighting on the third German line, counted as many as 11,000 prisoners. But by this date the Germans had been able to bring up powerful reinforcements, among which were the Prussian Guard. The English lost Delville Wood, and as the Thiepval pivot still held strongly the British offensive could not make progress. Happily, as on the Yser, General Foch was overlooking the execution of his own manœuvre, and from the 20th of July our troops again took up their attacks, first on a front of 3500 yards, to the north of the Somme between Hardaumont and Feuillères, then to the south of the river, between Barleux and Soyécourt, on a front of 4000 yards. These operations gave us 3000 prisoners and pinned down the German reserves. Thus relieved, the British carried Pozières and drove the enemy out of Delville Wood.

The results obtained in this month of July had

been brilliant, but the consumption of munitions had been so considerable and the field of battle so ploughed up with shell that the operations had to be toned down in the first days of August to permit the re-munitionment of the guns. Moreover, the British Army, whose organization and means were not yet at the full height the war demanded, was fatigued by the efforts already undertaken. Hence the month of August witnessed no important operation save the capture of Maurepas by our troops.

At the opening of September, the head of munitionments of all kinds was fairly well re-established, and immediately General Foch undertook a new series of combined offensives, in the directions of Bapaume, Peronne and Nesles. On the 3rd of September, to the south of the Somme, the armies of Fayolle and Micheler carried Berny, Vermandevillers, and Chilly, and took 3000 prisoners. On the 6th they passed Belloy and Chaulnes, and on the 12th they conquered Bouchavesnes.

The English moved in their turn on the 15th. They introduced great armoured cars for attack called "tanks." These machines were invulnerable to rifle fire and made a way for the advance of infantry by crushing the belts of barbed wire, overthrowing low walls, crushing flat the parapets of even the best-made works, and ruining the cemented dug-outs. The enemy's moral was heavily shaken by the apparition of these new engines of war. The Germans lost Ginchy, with 4000 prisoners, and then we pushed back along their whole line between Bouchavesnes and Thiepval, where they left 5000 of their men in the hands of our allies.

But the bad weather was approaching and making the operations very difficult. Further, these operations were costing in men and in their prodigious quantity of munitions something of which one

can gather some idea when one considers that in a single day as many rounds were fired by the artillery as in the whole seven months of the war of 1870–71.

Under these conditions the Higher Command, fearing to exhaust the country and to outstrip the rate of production possible to our munition factories, ordered the cessation of these operations on a large scale. We contented ourselves, therefore, during the months of October and November, with completing the results already obtained and rendering them secure by the occupation of important points such as Ablaincourt, Saillisel and Pressoire, and with taking posts of observation for the artillery such as Sailly, from which the enemy had been able to overlook our lines and could have rendered our rest-billets untenable in the course of the winter.

From this moment, the opening of October, though the tactical results of the battle of the Somme were yet to be completed, the strategical results were definitely acquired and were very brilliant. Forty German divisions had melted away on those fields of carnage which have been called the shambles of Europe, and as a consequence the Germans had been compelled to give up their attacks on Verdun. The German Crown Prince had hoped to found his reputation as a General upon the capture of the great French fortress. General Falkenhayn, the Chief of the German General Staff, was rendered responsible for the defeat, dismissed on the 5th of September, and replaced by Marshal Hindenburg. On the other fronts, the Russian offensive, in the absence of German reserves, went forward again in the Carpathians; the Italian offensive was victorious in the region of Gorizia. Finally, Rumania, judging definitive victory to be approaching, decided on the 18th of August to enter the coalition. These European events, which were

due in great part to the vigorous operation upon the Somme and hence to the intensity in attack, the offensive spirit and the activity of General Foch, it would have been impolitic to emphasize at the time, though they were far more important than the capture of twenty-five ruined villages, 35,000 prisoners, and 150 German guns, the booty which an order of the day on the 25th of September laid down to the credit side of the group of armies of the north.

The Council of the Entente.—The age limit of service had been reached by General Foch on the 30th of September, 1916; but under the present circumstances it was thought that his services were still too necessary to France for the active and vigorous victor of Saint Gond, of the Yser, the Artois, and the Somme, to be lost in a final retirement. This law, which had sacrificed so many eminent chiefs, was modified in his favour. He was accorded the Military Medal, and was maintained upon the active list.

Yet this was the period when the Government, with the idea of giving more vigour to the conduct of the war, began rejuvenating the Higher Command. General Joffre's position had become doubtful; Generals Foch and Castelnau were thought too old to conduct operations, and General Foch in particular, who was believed to be in ill-health, was especially aimed at.

The Generalissimo strongly refused to be separated from a colleague who was so indispensable to him, and discovered a happy means of using to the highest advantage of the country (now that the war was at low pressure in the north) that colleague's power of work and lucidity of intelligence and wide sweep of erudition. On the 13th of December, 1916, he persuaded the Government to create at Senlis a bureau for the study of the principal Inter-Allied

questions, and gave the direction of this new organ to General Foch.

This institution corresponded to what had become an urgent necessity of this moment.

The Generalissimo, heavily burdened by the duty of directing operations on the Western front, could not possibly follow, with all the attention they required, the grave events of which the whole world was the theatre. There was the crushing of Rumania, which had allowed the central empires to break through the blockade which was stifling them and to re-victual themselves. It also permitted them to reduce their eastern front considerably, and put all the Bulgarian Army at their disposal for an attack on Salonika. There was the revolution which was now rising in Russia and was every day weakening the armies of our allies and giving Germany a greater liberty of action.

On what point would the mass of enemy effectives thus rendered disponible be directed? Would it be upon Salonika, or upon the Italian front or upon the French? Here was a question which it was of vital importance to grasp, without mentioning the domestic affairs of the Near East, of Italy, or even of Germany itself, where on the 12th of December the Chancellor had read from the Tribune of the Reichstag proposals for a "German Peace" which he thought he could find means to get accepted by the Entente.

General Foch only stayed a few days at Senlis. In the immense complexity of the problems he had to solve his lucid mind had rapidly fixed the precise point on which it was necessary to concentrate at the outset.

In his view there was the one principal theatre of operations on which the most vital and immediate interests were at stake, and victory upon which would solve all other problems. The other theatres,

whatever their more or less distant interest might be, were secondary. The principal theatre was the Western front, from the North Sea to the Adriatic. It was there that we must prepare to receive the shock of the new German masses and there that we must conquer.

If the shock should take place in France, there had already been done what was necessary, so far as the means at our disposal allowed, for parrying it. If it took place on the Italian front, the possibility of sending aid to our allies had long been envisaged; it was a question of transport, the study of which had already been carried far.

There remained (what had not yet been envisaged) the possibility of an outflanking movement by way of Switzerland. Germany had already violated the neutrality of Belgium in the hopes of thus obtaining victory. She would do the same by Switzerland if she could see a military advantage in that act. Consequently, it was the problem of the defence of Switzerland which imposed itself with the greatest urgency at this moment.

General Foch went to Mirecourt with the nominal title of "General in Command of the Foch Group," and set to work, actively supported by General Weygand. By the month of March 1917 his task was completely achieved. A plan of operations had been elaborated in full accord with the Swiss General Staff, the battle had been prepared down to its last details; it would have been delivered by our three Eastern armies, reposing on their right upon the whole army of the Confederation.

Having fulfilled this important mission, General Foch was called on the 15th of May to the post of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, replacing General Petain, who had received the command of the armies of the north and the north-east. The General took up his quarters in the Invalides, and

became at the same time the technical counsellor of the Government, which desired to take a greater part in the direction of the war.

In the month of July 1917 came the complete breakdown of Russian military power. Happily, the United States, in their indignation against the crimes of the Germans, had come in upon our side since the 3rd of February; but though the intervention of the great Republic might guarantee victory for us, we had none the less to accept a very severe winter in the course of which France, England and Italy would have to hold in check, with their unaided resources, the whole military power of the central empires.

It was not upon Switzerland, it was upon Italy that the thunderbolt fell without so much as the warning of a lightning-flash. On the 22nd of October a formidable battering stroke of the Austrians and Germans on the Izonzo, accompanied by an out-flanking manœuvre in the Carnic Alps, seemed to be imminent. On the 25th the German *communiqués* made it clear that the Italian Army had been thrust back on the Izonzo with a loss of 30,000 prisoners and 300 guns. On the 26th the figures rose to 60,000 prisoners and 500 guns. And serious rumours spoke of over 100,000 prisoners and 700 guns. It was a disaster.

As early as the 26th General Foch had sent a laconic telegram to General Cadorna, saying, "If you need our troops we are ready to march."

The transport of four French Divisions, which were later followed by two English ones, began on the 28th. It was effected at the rate of forty trains in the twenty-four hours, so that the first of our elements detrained in the Lombard plain on the 1st of November. The command of this French Army of Italy was given to General Duchene, the Commander of the 10th Army. He left on the 29th,

after having received precise instructions from General Foch.

The Higher Italian Command, fearing to find its eastern armies taken in reverse by the German offensive coming from the Alps, was inclined to abandon ground and to fall back if necessary as far as the Mincio. Already the Tagliamento had been forced in spite of an abortive resistance. The evacuation of the Livenza line was in process of execution; while the enemy's propaganda had produced disastrous effects in certain centres of Italian opinion, and the moral of the army was badly shaken.

Foch hurried to Italy. He persuaded Cadorna that he had not suffered definitive defeat, that the 2nd Army alone was attacked, and that the enemy could be checked on the Piave and the Trentino. To achieve that object it would be necessary to have a plan of operations to which everybody should conform, an energetic command on the points to be held, and, behind the lines, a reorganization of the troops and the formation of a mass of manœuvre.

The Italian Army, which had rapidly recovered itself, resisted vigorously on the Piave and on the Plateau of Asiago. It was still on the same line in 1918 when the hour of its offensive struck.

Upon these events there was created at Versailles an Inter-Allied Superior Council of War. It was a hesitating but none the less decisive step towards unity of command. The business of this Council was to bring forward and concord the points of view of the various Governments of the Entente and then to give the Generals commanding the various armies the directing ideas necessary to the attainment of the common end. It was clearly a place for General Foch, and he was called to represent France and to preside over the decisions of the Council.

Now the Higher German Command, confident that it had rendered Italy incapable of undertaking

any offensive operation for a long time to come, had decided to turn all the efforts of the coalition against France. It wanted to make an end once and for all. Germany was beginning to get hungry, and she was exhausted. It was common sense that France ought to be crushed before the American Army, the instruction of which in the camps of the United States was being hastened, should be in a condition to make themselves felt upon the battlefields of Europe.

On this account the transport of troops and material from the Russian front to the Western, the importance of which had already been noted in November and December 1917, was intensified in February and March 1918. The whole of the neutral Press was filled with the rumour of a powerful German offensive which was being prepared with the greatest secrecy, with consummate art, and would immediately be launched upon the whole Western front with an effect that would be necessarily irresistible.

On our side, the Air Service and the Intelligence were able to make certain that by the 15th of March the offensive preparation of nearly the whole enemy front was fully completed: 188 of the enemy divisions were identified with absolute certainty, of which 109 alone were in the first line, so that one might presume the existence behind the front and at the disposal of the Higher Command of a mass of manœuvre of more than eighty divisions. It was further discovered that between the Oise and the sea, facing the Anglo-Belgian armies, the German front had been reinforced by thirty divisions. In front of the French Army it had been reinforced by ten divisions. Lastly, two new armies had been created: one the 17th, in the region of Valenciennes, under Otto von Below, facing Montreuil; and the other the 18th, in the region of Le Cateau,

facing Montdidier, under the command of Von Hutier, the victor of Riga and the specialist in sudden attack.

That part of the front, therefore, which was menaced by an imminent attack on a formidable scale ran from Ypres to La Fère, about 150 kilometres.

There was some temptation to parry this mortal blow by forestalling it with an immediate offensive. But to those who knew what defensive organizations the Germans had erected in French ground such an enterprise could only seem—in view of the numerical superiority of the enemy—an act of madness. The defensive organization here mentioned consisted of four principal lines.

First :—First there was drawn, following the front more or less exactly, an immense line from the sea to Switzerland, some 10,000 yards broad, formed of trenches which interlaced everywhere and were covered by forests of barbed wire, with armoured emplacements for guns and machine-guns, fortified woods and villages, and every perfection of modern science. It was called the Hindenburg Line, and the different sectors of this formidable "Chinese wall" bore names taken from the heroes of the Nibelungen—Wotan, Siegfried, Alberik, etc.

Second :—A system of two lines, more or less continuous, formed in a crescent shape, the convex side of which was turned towards Paris, and reposing at one end upon the entrenched camp of Lille, which had been powerfully organized, and at the other on the fortified region of Metz and Thionville.

The first of these lines was marked by Douai, Cambrai, La Fère, Vouziers, Dun-sur-Meuse, Pagny-sur-Moselle—from west to east it was called Hunding, Brunhilde, Kriemhilde, and Michel Stellung line.

The second of these lines branched off from the first towards Douai, was prolonged by Lequesnoy,

where it became double as far as Hirson. It covered Rocroi, Mezières, and Sedan, and ended in the entrenched camp of Metz.

THIRD :—The fourth line, also continuous and very solid, was marked by Valenciennes, Maubeuge, Philippeville and Givet. It covered the valleys of the Sambre and the Meuse, the vital arteries of the German Army, and was destined to afford time, in case of disaster, for the evacuation of Flanders.

FOURTH :—There were intermediary lines, not yet furnished, but capable of rendering good service, which reinforced in certain sectors the principal lines.

Further, there were complicated organizations called "switches," which united the lines perpendicularly one to the other. The rôle they had to play was that of great decoys which should canalize a victorious enemy offensive and take that offensive in reverse.

Only Alsace Lorraine seemed neglected. They were protected by nothing more than the Hindenburg Line, a fortified system going from Strasburg to the Donon Mountain, which seemed to have been made in preparation for a shortening of the front and for confining to Upper Alsace the progress of the Allies.

The total of this defensive system which anchored the invasion into the body of France will thus be seen to be formidable, and in the existing state of our organization and our material means it was impossible to forestall by an offensive the battering blow which threatened us as imminent.

The terrible chance of this offensive General Foch had foreseen since the month of November, while he was assuring the re-establishment of the situation in Italy by his presence there. From that moment he had emphasized the urgent necessity for developing the strength of our armies and of giving more play to the articulation of our reserves, of creating

an Inter-Allied Reserve, and of multiplying the lateral communications in order to render manœuvre possible.

All this had been but imperfectly carried out. The Council of Versailles had indeed decided to create an Inter-Allied Reserve, of which General Foch, with the title of " President of the Executive Committee of the Superior Council of War," was eventually to take command; but this decision had not been carried into effect. Nay, the British Government, having to feed its operations in Asia, reduced the effectives of its armies in France by 200,000 combatants. Italy could send workmen to our aid, but no soldiers. The little Belgian Army alone was being reinforced and reorganized in twelve divisions on the French model.

Finally, in their session of the 3rd of March, and in spite of the energetic protests of General Foch, the Council went so far as to decide on an important reduction of the Inter-Allied Reserve and to envisage nothing more than resisting, as well as might be, the German effort, though this threatened to be of the most formidable type!

It was indeed of such a type. On the 21st of March, at nine o'clock in the morning, after a very short but fearful artillery preparation, the forty-two enemy divisions of the 17th, 2nd and 18th German Armies were hurled between La Fère and Fontaine-les-Croisilles against the seventeen British divisions of the 3rd and 5th Armies. At the outset the front began to crack in the region of St. Quentin. On the 22nd of March it gave way on the eighty kilometres of the zone attacked. The retirement of the 3rd and 5th British Armies was carried out rapidly up to the 30th of March, on which date it had gone back thirty kilometres to the general line Arras–Moreuil–Albert–Montdidier. Already a wide breach had opened between the right of the

5th English Army as it retired westward and the left of the 6th French Army, which, in spite of all the activity it put forth, could not stretch its front quickly enough towards Chauny and Noyons to keep contact with our allies.

The road to Paris lay open; Hutier poured his reserves in there and they advanced as far as the line Montdidier–Noyons, only sixty kilometres from the capital. There was needed this extreme peril and the crushing force of this blow to open men's eyes and to put an end to international jealousies. It was understood at last that the Entente would be definitely defeated if the efforts of all the Allies were not co-ordinated towards a common end. On the 26th of March, at Doullens, on the proposition of the British Government, General Foch, though not yet given the supreme command of the Allied Armies, was charged with " co-ordinating the operations of those Armies." It was under this title that he had won the victory of the Yser. Men's ideas developed with surprising rapidity under the growing menace of imminent disaster; every objection dissolved like smoke, and before the month of March was ended General Foch had been named " Generalissimo of the French, English, American and Belgian Forces fighting upon the Western Front."

The Entente had now at last a Chief, and the very first condition of victory was at last brought into being.

The Generalissimo

A.—*The Defensive.*

The situation was so difficult that a leader of other stuff would probably have despaired of it. All the decisions that had to be taken were handi-

capped by a double threat from the enemy, the success of either of which would have been decisive. There was the threat to seize the ports of the Channel, the realization of which would have thrown the English Army back on the sea. There was the threat of reaching Paris, the success of which enterprise might well ruin the *moral* of the French people and force its Government to make peace.

There was therefore no free play for the reserves—which, moreover, were already insufficient in number. These reserves had to be disposed in such a manner that they could check any serious advance of the Germans towards the coast and any advance at all towards Paris, or at least, any advance on such a scale as to raise anxiety.

The army of Below was only twelve kilometres from Amiens *and held under the fire of its heavy artillery the sole railway line communicating directly with the northern part of the front.* It was under these conditions that the army of Hutier made yet another violent thrust on the 30th of March towards Paris, in a powerful effort at breaking the line.

The victor of Saint Gond and the Yser—he and his much-reduced staff installed at Sarcus, a village lost in the depths of Picardy—judged indeed that the situation was very serious, but not to be despaired of, and that strength of will, activity, energy and intelligence would overcome every difficulty.

To build up reserves, levies were made from all parts of the front not directly menaced. General Pershing nobly put at the disposition of General Foch the as yet small American Army, which by the terms of our treaties was not to have been engaged in the field of battle till much later. The divisions of this Army at once relieved in the quiet sectors war-trained French divisions, which passed to the line of fire. A new group of Franco-British

armies, constituted under the command of General Fayolle, succeeded in "welding over" the breach in the line which yawned so wide towards Paris, and thanks to prodigies of heroism and very painful sacrifices as well, the liaison between the French and the British was maintained, and stopped Hutier's powerful offensive dead.

It seemed that the check was definite enough so far as this field was concerned. Of the ninety German divisions fronting us in this region at least eighty-three had been put through the mill and very severely mauled. There was nothing behind to support the assaulting columns. The German offensive was out of breath. It had failed.

The German Higher Command, therefore, adopted a new and more modest conception suited to its present resources. Paris seemed hardly accessible, and eighty kilometres was too extended a front for its weakened reserves. Amiens was to be the new objective, and the front of attack was to be only forty kilometres. This new effort was made between the 4th and the 8th of April. It was checked, as its predecessor had been, but only after furious fights. The road to Amiens was barred, as had been that to Paris. The German reserves were getting exhausted; more than 100 divisions had already more or less melted in the furnace.

Hindenburg would not give up. Amiens cannot be reached; his forces no longer have the strength to attack on a front of forty kilometres. Well, then, he determined to strike with twenty divisions on a front of only twenty-five kilometres, between Ypres and La Bassée, with the objectives of Calais and Dunkerque; that is, with the intention of throwing back the British line and separating it from the Belgian.

On the 9th of April a Portuguese division was badly shaken and dragged into its retreat five

divisions of the British Army. The enemy crossed the river Lys and pushed forward as far as Mount Kemmel.

But this methodical displacement of the German objectives more and more to the north had by now for a long time past given General Foch the key of the situation. His alert mind developed its plan with greater swiftness than theirs. Painfully and drop by drop, as it were (for the main railway line by Amiens was under the enemy's fire), the French reserves had for a long time past been passed northward, and already a detachment of General de Mitry's army was supporting the British Army.

The fighting was exceedingly severe. By the end of April the German armies of the north, which had now thrown into the battle at least 150 divisions (of which fifty had been engaged two or three times), which had also suffered very heavy losses, and which were also showing unequivocal signs of moral fatigue, gave up the attack. Unfortunately, the British Army on its side was too exhausted and too reduced in effectives to be able to pass to the offensive. Moreover, the French reserves were weakened, and the weakening of the British Army, also, compelled General Foch to keep portions of his own reserve in the north. Further, the communications were still so precarious as to render manœuvre difficult. The American Army was growing rapidly, it is true, and every day 6000 to 8000 men disembarked in our ports. But this number of men were not trained soldiers. Italy on her side declared that she still needed the two French divisions which we had in her territory, and could only send two divisions of her own to our aid.

To sum up: after this first passage of arms, the Allies only had at the end of the month of May 172

divisions to oppose to the 212 German divisions by then reconstituted. The Generalissimo did not dispose of the strategic reserve which would have been necessary for victory, and the double threat of the enemy against Paris and against the coast was still in existence.

Indeed, the threat against Paris was not slow in defining itself. One of the consequences of the " pocket " seized towards Amiens by Hutier's army had been to create, between La Fère and Montdidier, an offensive base of about forty kilometres, fronting towards Paris, with the river Oise as the axis for an advance. But this foundation for an advance could not be utilized so long as the wooded hills of the region of Compiègne and Villers-Cotterêts remained in the hands of such a master of manœuvre as General Foch; for so long as he held them every operation against Paris was menaced on its flank.

It was necessary, therefore, to get round this region, which was too difficult a one to be cleared by a frontal attack, and in order to get round it the ridge of the Chemin des Dames must be carried. The French Command, which had been obliged to reinforce points where the danger was vital, relied here upon the natural strength of the ground and had put only five divisions in the first line for the whole forty kilometres between Anizy-le-Château and Berry-au-Bac, with four divisions in reserve.

On the 27th of May twenty-two German divisions sprang to the assault of these positions, swept away the forces defending them, and on the second day, advancing twelve kilometres, reached the banks of the Vesle. On the 29th of May the enemy had carried Soissons; on the 31st he forced the passage of the Ailette river; and on the 1st of June he entered Château-Thierry and stood upon the banks of the Marne from that town up as far as Dormans.

Henceforward the enemy was in possession of a second base of operations, between Soissons and Château-Thierry, which aimed at Paris with the river Marne as the axis for an advance. The capital stands at the centre of a circumference with a radius of sixty kilometres, from which circumference the German waves of attack, ceaselessly renewed, now broke against the hill-forests of Laigle, Compiègne and Villers-Cotterêts, which our troops heroically defended. Guns of a power hitherto unknown were further delivering upon Paris their daily tons of explosives, which blew in the walls of churches, destroyed manufactories and private houses, opened great craters in the streets, and killed numerous victims, including women and children. It was a knell that the German Higher Command was ringing for France, and an advertisement to the world of what a German victory would mean.

But France, under the energetic direction of M. Clemenceau, remained firm, and kept full confidence in those iron men to whom she had entrusted her destinies. As for General Foch, never was his faith more ardent, nor his mind calmer or more clear, nor his vision less troubled.

The fall of Château-Thierry, since it cut the railway between Paris and Nancy, imposed fresh delays upon the communications between eastern and western parts of the front. Our reserves could now only move much more slowly. Our troops had therefore for some time longer to hold out where they stood, at the price of sacrifices in men and ground which were occasionally bitter indeed. But things were destined to come right. A sufficient display of activity and of thought brought up reserves before the enemy could finally triumph over the resistance of the poilus, and it was clear at last that we should emerge from the struggle

victorious. Every one by this time saw and felt this.

But what General Foch told no one was that he had divined an error the enemy would make, and was at that moment massing reserves in the woods of Villers-Cotterêts, from which point he foresaw that there would be a possibility, in no long delay, of attempting a manœuvre upon interior lines against one of the two branches of the German pincers, or against their centre. Troops were brought up from the east, the centre, and even from the north. American divisions which had barely achieved their training assured the defence of considerable sectors, while, from the 2nd to the 15th of June, our troops resisted formidable attacks directed first against Rheims, then against Compiègne, and finally against the forest of Villers-Cotterêts itself.

At the end of this violent fighting Hindenburg had at his disposal to act as a mass of manœuvre no more than three fresh divisions and thirty more or less tired ones.

B.—*The Decisive Counter-Offensive*

A calm succeeded to this tempest. The energy of the enemy was for the moment exhausted, and General Foch used the interval to build up his mass of manœuvre in the region of Compiègne.

The "pocket" of Château-Thierry was clearly the weak point of the German decision, for Rheims, having held out against every attack, the enemy had no convenient railway at his command by which to feed the battle with men and munitions. It was therefore here that Foch designed to strike on the 18th of July, and he prepared against that date an offensive on a large scale, facing eastward, on the forty-kilometre front between the river Aisne and Belloy.

Our Air Service had given us warning during the

first fortnight of July of a novel enemy activity in the woods north of Dormans. The Germans were gathering in this region men and heavy guns and munitions, and the pontoons necessary for the crossing of the Marne. They were evidently preparing a new and formidable push towards Paris, across and southward of that river. They knew that this region was deprived of natural defences and was very lightly held. The Generalissimo, when he received information of these enemy dispositions, refused to change his own in any point. Above all did he refuse to reinforce beyond a certain measure the defence of the Marne. If the enemy were to commit the error of launching his reserves to the south of that river, so much the better. Those troops would then not be facing the forest of Villers-Cotterêts, and the German "pocket" would be in great peril. Once more there appeared the formula that "a battle is a struggle between two wills," and we are about to see what the resultant was to be when the force of Foch's should clash with that of Hindenburg.

When the Instructor in General Tactics at the School of War refused to support the defence of the Marne—a decision which could not but incite the enemy to press towards this side with the mass of his reserves—had he not perhaps in mind, through a flash of genius, the memory of Napoleon refusing to support the right of his army on the day of Austerlitz?—when Davout was retiring that right toward the lakes and luring to his pursuit the Russian reserves so that they evacuated the plateau of Pratzen? No doubt it will remain the General's secret. At any rate, the fine manœuvre which was now about to open and which was to be crowned by decisive victory was a development on a large scale of that same operation of which the day of Austerlitz had given, as it were, a cinema model.

On the 15th of July the Germans crossed the Marne and hastened with heavy reinforcements of men and material to gather the fruits of their victory and push forward in great strength towards the south.

And, on the 18th of July, at dawn, on the day and at the hour which had been settled on long before, Mangin and Degoutte, whose skirmishing line was preceded by a barrage fire and accompanied by tanks, debouched from the forest of Villers-Cotterêts, and pierced, north of Soissons, upon a front of twenty kilometres, far into the reduced German centre. By the evening of the 19th of July the two French armies had captured 20,000 prisoners and 400 guns!

Under this terrible blow Hindenburg fell back. The Germans evacuated the south bank of the Marne at top speed. On the 21st they let go their hold of Château-Thierry. On the night of the 27th they retreated from the fatal river which once more had proved disastrous to them. On the 29th, pressed in front and flank, they held their line on the Aisne and the Vesle from Soissons, which Mangin had recovered, to a point below Rheims. That glorious city, terribly mutilated, was now victorious.

A wave of enthusiasm rose throughout the world. As for France, she felt that victory was beginning to spread its wings. The whole country applauded the proposal of M. Clemenceau on the 6th of August that the President of the Republic should name General Foch a Marshal of France.

"The dignity of Marshal of France," ran the report of the Prime Minister, "is not to be regarded only as a reward for past services. It will rather confirm for the future the authority of that great man-at-arms who has been called to lead the Armies of the Entente to a decisive victory."

Marshal Foch was about to transform that act of faith into a reality. The operations which were to follow are characterized by a special mark of nervous energy, vigour and marvellous precision.

The Marshal was about to prove at last by his action that the principles of the art of war never change, and that the core of his instruction in the School of war still had its full value; that the Napoleonic idea, at once elastic and clear, had kept all its strength in spite of the formidable apparatus and heavy creations of German industrial war. The battle was let loose over nearly 800 kilometres, from the North Sea to Switzerland. The whole line was alight, and half France sounded night and day with the uninterrupted rumbling of the cannon. As the attacks followed each other in a dozen different fields and often overlapped, as the whole scheme of this gigantic drama seems haphazard, one might be tempted to imagine that each leader was pushing straight forward, each according to his own temperament, and that hence the advance, obviously general upon the whole front, might seem probably due to the initiative of the various commanders of sectors, or at the most to that of the various Generals commanding the armies. A more attentive examination of the affair proves the contrary. A single will animated the whole, and a single brain directed the whole, following throughout rigorously a logical method.

We have already seen that the enemy was anchored into French soil on four principal lines of defence. We shall now see the Marshal pushing the German armies back everywhere to their defences behind the Hindenburg Line, then breaching that strong wall and vigorously attacking points of less resistance, piercing or turning the further lines behind, always advancing, ceaselessly striking, so that the enemy should never have time to rally, to

reconstitute his reserves, or to manœuvre them. And this was to proceed until the enemy, finally thrown out of all his trenches and deprived of half his artillery, was reduced to the mercy of his conqueror.

As to the methods employed to obtain these more than human efforts from tired troops and decimated reserves, to achieve rapid transport of units, material and munitions necessary for each stroke, in spite of the bad condition and congestion of railways which had in part to be actually captured from the enemy; in a word, to accomplish with nineteen armies, representing a total effective of six million men, the marvellous feat which had been accomplished in 1914 on the Yser with five; it will certainly remain for a century an inexhaustible subject for study and reflection for soldiers. The pushing back of the enemy on to the Hindenburg Line and the reduction of the dangerous Albert-Montdidier-Noyons "pocket" were tasks finally achieved by the 24th of December. This result was the work of six Franco-British offensives.

First:—The Marshal opened what he himself called the "adventure of Amiens" by launching Rawlinson and Debeney between Albert and Montdidier. Aircraft, artillery and tanks all came into play with the greatest energy and drive. There was an immediate advance of twelve kilometres to Lihous and Le Quesnoy-en-Santerre. When that attack was exhausted the Marshal launched the 3rd Army between the Aisne and the Oise. Humbert, its commander, was somewhat anxious. He had no reserve at all. "Go forward all the same," said the Marshal. He went forward, he took Ribecourt, then Canny-sur-Matz, reaching the Oise to the south-east of Noyons.

Second:—On the 22nd of August a new English offensive appeared between Albert and Fray-sur-Somme. Albert was captured and our allies

reached the outskirts of Bapaume. At the same time the vigorous French attack got as far as the river Ailette, carrying Roye and Lassigny. Outflanked, bewildered and at a loss, Hutier fell back on the 29th of August to the line Peronne–Noyons. Indeed, rather than spoil the symmetry of a fine retreat, he would not defend Noyons, and De Marwitz on his side abandoned Bapaume and Combles on the 30th.

THIRD :—This was the moment in which to launch a great attack in the north. The Generalissimo asked it of Marshal Haig. The latter, though eager, pointed out that he had no great force for such an action. "Attempt it all the same," said Foch; and Haig sent forward Horne and Byng upon the Scarpe, upon the 26th of August, thereby bringing about immediately the retreat of Von Quast between Bailleul and Bethune.

FOURTH :—On the 6th of September Rawlinson and Debeney took up their movement again between Peronne and Ham. The enemy abandoned Ham and Tergnier.

FIFTH :—Haig on the 18th of September again took up the attack, which he launched towards Gonzeaucourt upon a front of 20,000 yards, and thus brought the British infantry against the Hindenburg Line itself.

SIXTH :—Finally, on the 24th of September a vigorous offensive on the part of Rawlinson and Debeney, between the Somme and the Omignon, threw Von Hutier behind the great line of defence where it faced St. Quentin.

Upon this date of the 24th of September the preliminary operations came to an end. Upon a front of 160 kilometres from the sea to the Aisne our armies, tired and reduced though they were, but with a heightened moral, were taking in hand the reduction of the Hindenburg Line.

It was from this date that Germany, which had always thought itself on the eve of victory until then, felt that it was defeated. It could no longer even threaten. The great pieces which had fired on Paris were now silent.

Here, indeed, one may see the full application of that great principle, " the weaker one is the more one should attack "; and of that other, drawn from the lessons by the battle of Gravelotte : " In that constant race towards superiority of moral the business in hand was to repeat the necessary aggressive acts during a whole day, and that in the absence of strong reserves. The goal was reached by isolated actions rather than by a common plan. In the lack of a great common plan, which had had to be given up, partial plans were brought into being, and what resulted was a victory of moral all compact of energy and of action."

It is here necessary to remark that the Hindenburg Line had already been breached in two places. On the 2nd of September in the Artois the battalions of Horne, preceded by tanks, had crushed and pushed far into the Drocourt–Quéant organization, just at the point where the three first lines joined. Marshal Foch had the ability to use that success later on before its value was lost.

On the 12th of September, in the Argonne, a brilliant Franco-American offensive, supported by our armoured cars, had taken Von Gallwitz unawares and had pinched off the bulge of St. Mihiel, and brought the Americans right up to the Michel Stellung. This victory put at our disposal the railway from Verdun to Nancy, and sensibly bettered the communications of this eastern part of our front.

After the reaching of the Hindenburg Line assaults were redoubled against the Wotan, Siegfried and Alberik sectors from the sea down to the Aisne.

We have already remarked that on the 2nd of September Horne had breached the Wotan sector. Marshal Foch gave the signal on the 22nd of September for another effort in the same region, and this time the tanks got right up to the second line of defence, in front of Cambrai.

All that part of the Wotan which stretched up as far as Lille was taken in reverse and was no longer capable of defence. Von Quast evacuated it between Armentières and the river Scarpe.

Immediately afterwards, on the 28th of September, the Marshal launched a Franco-Belgian offensive reaching right up to the sea-coast. Sixt von Arnim could hardly hold his positions. His army, menaced on its left flank, was growing anxious though hardly yet demoralized. The army-group of King Albert of Belgium went forward easily enough through the complicated system of the Franken, Prussische, and Bayerische Stellungen, thus fully disengaging Ypres, Amentières and Lens. Then, on the 2nd of October, Rawlinson carried St. Quentin, while on the 31st of September Horne had attacked on a 13,000 yards front towards Le Catelet and Sequehart and gone forward deeply into the Siegfried sector, which was fully pierced by the 9th of October.

On the 31st of September Mangin had pressed back the right wing of the Crown Prince in the difficult regions of the Ailette, and the battalions of Guillaumat had pushed into the German wire on a front of 15,000 yards between the Vesle and the Aisne. On the 4th of October they outflanked the right of the German armies in Champagne, and the Crown Prince evacuated the belt 45 kilometres long by 15 deep, abandoning Laon on the west and retiring on the east from before the glorious ruins of Rheims.

Ludendorff now felt that nothing could ward off the approaching catastrophe.

The new Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, wished to formulate an academic Peace programme and discuss its terms with America. Ludendorff opposed that plan. The military situation permitted of no delays. If the necessary time to relieve the army of the pressure upon it was to be gained and to confine the approaching disaster within certain limits, an armistice must be asked for. Max of Baden yielded his point on the 5th of October.

This diplomatic manœuvre did not constitute a sufficient reason in the eyes of Marshal Foch for checking the military operations.

On the 12th of October only one sector of the Hindenburg Line still held out, the Alberik Stellung. This was in the region of La Fère, where the power of the first line was reinforced by the immediate neighbourhood of a second; but this second line was turned on the north by English columns debouching from St. Quentin and on the south by French columns debouching from Laon. It was, therefore, not even defended, no more than was La Fère, whereas that place, which had been attacked in more detail, might have held our armies in check for some days.

On the 13th of October Dixmude, where several German battalions were still holding out, was carried by a Franco-Belgian offensive. The army of Von Arnim had therefore to fall back upon Lille, evacuating the last trenches which it still held towards the sea, and leaving in the hands of our allies 12,000 prisoners and considerable material. The right flank of the German armies was now uncovered, and a turning movement had become possible which would take in reverse all the carefully disposed lines of defence which were facing the south-west—the direction of the original German ambition. This manœuvre was emphasized by a disembarka-

tion from the British Fleet under Admiral Keyes, executed on the 16th of October, in the port of Ostend, whence the enemy had just fled in haste, leaving behind him his cannon and his magazines, and where the population, in a fever of excitement at their release, had themselves disarmed the enemy's stragglers. The outflanking movement was also reinforced by an offensive movement of the Franco-Belgian army, which caused Thourout, Thielt and Courtrai to fall, and brought the allies to the south of the river Lys, while Von Arnim fell back behind the river Deule, abandoning the coast and its batteries up to the Bruges Canal.

The Higher German Command could no longer count on anything but certain water-lines to prolong its resistance upon this side. Its strong defensive organizations had been passed and the open plain unrolled before the Allied cavalry, which was scouting as early as the 19th of October on a front of sixty kilometres for the general offensive of the armies of Flanders which Marshal Foch was launching in the direction of Ghent.

On the 20th of October the general situation might be summed up as follows. The Hindenburg Line no longer existed from the sea right down to the Argonne. All the northern part of the Second Line was in our power right to Rethel—that is, over an extent of 160 kilometres; and on that same day a powerful attack delivered by Guillaumat was to carry the Hunding Stellung over a front of fifty kilometres down to the region of Sissone. The Third Line was still nearly intact, save near Le Cateau; but it was taken in reverse by the great outflanking attack which was in progress upon the north and which, as it had reached Toucoing and Roubaix, also menaced the Fourth Line.

The defeat of Germany thus clearly inscribed upon the ground and map appears equally clearly

from an examination of the German forces disponible.

The German Higher Command had now in line only 160 reduced divisions, which is very little for the holding of 750 kilometres. Of this number it had but thirty-one in sector-reserves to assure the relief of troops and to give the men the absolutely indispensable minimum of repose. It only had, to use as a mass of manœuvre, ten exhausted divisions left in the place of the twenty-four which it could still boast on the 2nd of October, and of the forty-five which it had in hand on the 15th of August. Upon our side, on the contrary, to the 105 French divisions, the sixty British, the twelve Belgian and the two Italian, there had already been added twenty-six American divisions, each in strength of effectives double our own; while ten more American divisions were on the point of coming in. There were therefore now present 215 divisions upon our side, about equivalent in strength to 251 German divisions. It was no longer possible for the enemy to preserve any illusion or keep his eyes closed. Ludendorff took fright at the complete breakdown of his system of defence and at the menace of a turning manœuvre to which he could make no reply. He declared the situation to be desperate, and the Reichstag was warned in two tumultuous sessions on the 24th and 25th of October that a catastrophe was imminent.

The armistice conditions imposed by the Allies and communicated by Marshal Foch to the German plenipotentiaries underlined the defeat. There was no longer any question of peace proposals; there was question only of a capitulation, in every way similar to that which Bulgaria had accepted and which Austria was on the point of accepting. The Fleet, the pride of pan-Germanism, must be sur-

rendered; Belgium and all French territory, including Alsace-Lorraine, must be evacuated; the French Army must occupy Metz and Strassburg, and the enemy must allow the Allied Armies to hold the bridge-heads of the Rhine. Marshal Foch still struck with great rapidity and greater and greater vigour, depriving Ludendorff of all liberty of action and of all possibility of rallying. The German General Staff had but one chance for avoiding the fatal blow, and that was to give ground on a very great scale and at the expense of extremely rapid marching, to put its armies together again far to the rear, as for instance behind the Meuse. It had successfully carried out such manœuvres from the Marne to the Aisne in 1914 and after the Battle of the Somme in 1917. But now, dogged without respite by our troops, who, exhausted and decimated but kept up to the mark by the idea of victory and ceaselessly urged forward by an iron will, the enemy could not renew the experiment. The German units disengaged themselves and retired each as best it could, sometimes in mere flight, always leaving behind them many men and an enormous mass of material.

On the 28th of October, between the Sambre and the Serre, Hutier gave up a belt twenty-five kilometres long by eight kilometres broad, to Debeney, to avoid a breach of his line, but without succeeding in making Debeney lose contact. On the 2nd of November the British Army got round Valenciennes, the right-hand pivot of the fourth and last line of defence. On the 5th of November, Horne, Byng, Rawlinson and Debeney let loose a strong attack sixty kilometres long, between Valenciennes and Guise, and this brilliant operation secured 13,000 prisoners. Landrecies, the Forest of Mormal, and the last defences of the Third Line were carried. On that same day, to the north of the

Argonne, the Americans went forward five kilometres on a front of thirty, and King Albert's group of armies already threatened Ghent.

Ludendorff, against whom the anger of all Germany had now turned, was replaced as First Quartermaster-General by General Grœner, but the latter had no more luck than his predecessor. In vain did Hindenburg on the 2nd of November solemnly adjure Germany to make one last effort to save its honour. Germany had decided to capitulate. In vain did the old Marshal call into being a Council of National Defence on the 5th of November, at the moment when the Third Line of defence was breaking down, with the object of organizing a fight to the very end. Grœner, in order to avoid the final blow, called in his turn for the immediate signature of the armistice at no matter what price, and to gain even a single day he fell back from Valenciennes to the Meuse over eight or ten kilometres, followed step for step by the eager columns of Debeney, Mangin, Degoutte, Guillaumat and Gouraud.

On the 7th of November, before the armistice was signed, he fell back with Valenciennes as his pivot. The retreat in the centre was of no less than eighteen kilometres, and on our right the Americans entered Sedan. Foch maintained his hold. "Victory," he had himself once said, "is an inclined plain. On condition that you do not check your movement the moving mass perpetually increases its speed."

On the 9th of November the retreat grew rapid between Ghent and the Meuse. Our cavalry, sent forward to forage, captured whole trains of material and provisions. Our armies advanced along the whole of the immense line. A last offensive was ready to be delivered in the east, where Castelnau's group was to strike in touch with the American

Army, which had suffered the least. Probably this shock, delivered by young and eager troops, against tired, demoralized and reduced units, short of munitionment, would have brought about the rupture of the centre, the pouring of the allied masses through an open breach, and the capture of the five armies of the Crown Prince of Bavaria still remaining in Belgium. If a rout, which had become by this time inevitable, was to be avoided, there was nothing for it but to capitulate within twenty-four hours.

On the 11th of November the armistice was signed and the German Empire capitulated unconditionally.

We see, then, that the victory of Marshal Foch, the greatest and most complete in history, had not the external character which victories have borne through centuries; a decisive attack, the breach of the enemy's formation, his flight, and a pursuit. It did not bear this external appearance because Germany, a nation in arms, had capitulated as a whole, in order to avoid the destruction of its troops.

France in 1871 thought it her duty to continue the struggle for honour after the complete destruction of her army. To this resolution she owes in great part the glory she at present enjoys. That is well enough; but what, in the light of historical fact, we must never allow to be said or thought, is that the German Army was not conquered. We must clearly understand that if the German regiments in their return to German towns passed under triumphal arches it was because the capitulation of Germany as a whole had saved them from disaster. The army of Bazaine was not conquered in 1870. It had even proved victorious at Borny, at Rosenville, at Ladonchamps, and elsewhere. Then its chief capitulated. It never came into

our heads to say that the army of Metz had not been defeated.

The representatives of the nation were certainly of the opinion here put forward. On the 11th of November, when the Prime Minister, M. Georges Clemenceau, a last and glorious survivor of those who had drawn up the national Protest in 1871, entered the Tribune of the Chamber to read the text of the armistice, the Deputies replied that the following order of the day, enthusiastically adopted upon the vote of 495 members: "The Armies of the Republic and their Chiefs, Citizen Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister and Minister of War, Marshal Foch, Generalissimo of the Allied Armies, have deserved well of their country."

The brilliant career of Marshal Foch is not over. His armies are at this moment on guard along the Rhine, seeing to it that a defeated Germany shall exactly carry out that to which she is pledged. Meanwhile, at the conference table, the laws of a new world are under discussion; and the Marshal is there also, the counsellor of the diplomatists, standing, to the end, where danger threatens.

The presence of this great soldier in the deliberations of the congress, where so many different and conflicting interests are at work, is a sure guarantee that France will not be deprived of the benefits of a victory which she has bought so dearly with the best of her blood.

PRECEPTS

ACTION.—In tactics, *action* is the *governing rule* of war.

ACTION OF DEMONSTRATION.—Though preliminary action is often termed *a combat of mere demonstration*, it implies an extreme energy on the part of the performers. For troops in action, for secondary first-line units, there is only one manner of fighting, and that is to fight with the utmost vigour, with all available means, utilizing fire, marching power, everything. These are the only principles the rank and file and units used in preparation need consider. To speak to them of a demonstration, a dragging fight, a slow action, still more of keeping still, would amount to inducing them not to act, to preparing them for flight, to breaking their spirit at the very moment when that spirit must be most exalted.

Such an action, both slow and of long duration, which preparation demands, is a result of the commander's applying the principle of economy of forces in a fashion he alone can appreciate and determine.

The higher command devotes to preparation a minimum of force, so as to be able to reinforce the decisive act as strongly as possible; the subordinate commanders, who are in charge of preparation, establish and reinforce their three lines according to the front ascribed to them and to the efforts to be made. The rank and file, however, when in action, must only know *full action*, the object of which is to *conquer* or to *hold*.

In consequence, every attack, once undertaken, must be fought to a finish; every defence, once begun, must be carried on with the utmost energy.

ACTIVITY OF GENERALS.—The Commander of the 2nd Army having been informed at last at two o'clock, by a message from the General commanding the 20th Division and dated Thiaucourt, 11.30, galloped to the plateau. He covered in fifty-five minutes the space of more than twenty kilometres between it and Pont-à-Mousson.

Having come before four o'clock to the heights which overlook Gorze, on which the 5th Division was fighting, he could gather what the general situation was, and his decision was rapidly formed.

Towards ten o'clock, after the last shots had been fired in the wood of Ognons and silence

came upon the plateau, Prince Frederick Charles returned to his headquarters at Gorze.

ADVANCE GUARD. — The organ which guarantees the tactical security of a large unit (of an army corps in the case under consideration) is the advance guard, meaning by this general term a detachment placed on the flank, in front or in the rear of the main body; such a detachment to utilize in any case its own resisting power for the benefit of the main body, in order to enable that body to carry out the operation prescribed and to comply with the orders received. Further, as that operation, those orders, are constantly changing, it may be at once concluded that the manner of acting of the advance guard, the tactics it will have to resort to, will have to be determined in each particular case by the nature of the operation to be protected as well as by the circumstances (time, space, ground) surrounding the advance guard as it moves forward.

When one moves at night, without a light, in one's own house, what does one do? Does one not (though it is a ground one knows well) extend one's arm in front of one so as to avoid knocking one's head against the wall? The extended arm is nothing but an advance guard.

The arm keeps its suppleness while it advances and only stiffens more or less when it meets an obstacle, in order to perform its duty without risk, to open a door, for instance; in the same way, the advance guard can advance and go into action without risking destruction, provided it uses suppleness and strength, manœuvring power, resisting power.

In the past, the unknown disappeared the moment the battle-field was entered.

In Napoleon's time, fighting dispositions were taken at a very short distance in presence of an enemy one could easily see, the power and situation of whom could be easily measured. Later, in proportion as the range and power of arms increased, distances increased too; troops had to look for shelter, to adopt a more and more dispersed order. Still, the smoke produced by powder enabled the general to reconnoitre, at least partly, the first dispositions of the enemy. The latter disclosed by his fire the positions he was occupying. Smokeless powder has changed the picture and made the unknown both *complete and lasting*. Going into action to-day reminds one of a struggle between two blind men, between two adversaries who perpetually seek each other but cannot see. Shall our new method, then, consist in rushing straight on, or to the right, or to the left,

at random? Shall we allow the enemy to throw his arms round our body, to grasp us completely, without our retaining the possibility of first grasping him ourselves, and of striking hard? Obviously not. In order to conquer that unknown which follows us until the very point of going into action, there is only one means, which consists in looking out until the last moment, even on the battle-field, for *information ;* there is only one way : extending the arm before one, utilizing the advance guard, which keeps searching for, and supplying, information even on the battle-field.

To inform, and, therefore, to *reconnoitre,* this is the first and constant duty of the advance guard.

On what should it give information? On the *main body* of the enemy forces.

At Pouilly, the Kettler brigade found itself before parties of *francs-tireurs* who obscured the field of view; it was necessary to try and see beyond them. An advance guard was sent out. It scattered those parties, started reconnoitring, then attacked the village of Pouilly.

It found the main line of resistance of the enemy behind that place; its mission had then come to an end.

As a matter of fact, the enemy, with his reconnaissances, with his detachments of

all kinds, is everywhere. Still, his main body is only to be found on one point, in a certain region. It is the main body we must *strike*; it is against the main body we must *guard ourselves*; it is the main body, therefore, on which we must have information. We must know where that main body actually is; therefore, we must break through the security service which obviously covers it. Our organ of information has therefore to be endowed with force, to possess a breaking power. But even this does not suffice; we must know *what* the main body is, *what it is worth*. The advance guard must, then, in order to compel the main body of the adversary to make itself known, oblige it to deploy; but that task presupposes attack—that is, full forces in artillery and infantry.

The reconnoitring mission of the advance guard must be pushed up to that point—full information on the main enemy body: that mission comes to an end when this first point, information about the enemy's main body, has been secured.

There is, however, another circumstance which impedes our manœuvre, namely, *dispersion*.

Troops arrive in a marching column, or even in several marching columns: it takes

an army corps, thirteen or fourteen miles long, five or six hours to march past a given point or to make the rear come up with the head of the column; for these five or six hours, the army corps only disposes of part of its forces. Still the officer commanding the army corps cannot think of pouring his forces drop by drop into action, even if he is aware of the *direction* to be taken; he must therefore first manage to assemble, then to deploy and array his troops facing their objective.

Under different circumstances, another mode of assembling has to be resorted to.

The army of Alsace in 1870 had to concentrate its 1st, 5th, and 7th Corps before risking a battle; its advance guard, the Douai division, might enable it to do so.

It was the same case at Jena, at Montenotte.

In either case, the preparatory operation, which may last a long time, must be covered; otherwise it will be endangered. This implies security, which it is the business of the advance guard to supply. The latter must enable all the fighting troops to fall into line in spite of the enemy's presence.

To cover the forces, first while assembling, then while being put into action, such is the second mission devolving on the advance guard.

The main body must in any case be provided with a *zone of manœuvre*, but it is also necessary to *hold safely* all the issues which the main body must utilize in order to deploy.

To hold these issues safely means enabling troops to perform under good cover the double operation of arrival and deployment. The advance guard must hold the keys of the avenues of approach whereby arrival is effected or debouching from which deployment is made.

But there remains a further point. So long as we have not beaten or at least attacked the enemy, he keeps his *freedom of action ;* he remains free to alter his situation or to shun the manœuvre we are preparing against him.

The two first results attained by the advance guard—

The reconnoitring of the enemy :

The covering of our own forces—these would not be of the slightest use to us if the advance guard did no more.

The reconnoitred enemy might at the last moment alter his dispositions, or, if need be, steal away. The manœuvre we had carefully prepared and covered would be void from the very moment we began to carry it out.

The reconnaissance must therefore be followed by an attack, made by the advance

guard with the object of fixing the adversary, more especially if, in the course of the reconnaissance, the enemy has been found to be manœuvring.

You cannot strike an enemy who is running away in order to shun the blow. You must first take him by the collar to compel him to receive the blow.

Taking the enemy by the collar is the function of the advance guard.

Those three unavoidable conditions of war : the *unknown, dispersion, freedom of the enemy,* gave rise to the advance guard and determine its threefold task, which is :

1. To *inform,* and therefore to *reconnoitre* up to the moment the main body goes into action.

2. To *cover* the gathering of the main body and to *prepare* its entrance on the field.

3. To *fix* the adversary one intends attacking.

The proper way of handling an advance guard naturally results from this threefold task :

I. There must be an *offensive*—

1. In order to *reconnoitre ;* that is, in order to peer through the service of security established on his side by the adversary, and to reach his main body and compel it to show itself.

2. In order to *conquer* the ground necessary to the *protective* mission of the advance guard.

3. In order to *conquer* the ground necessary to its own *preparatory* mission, as well as the space needed by the main body for going into action; room for approach, and room of deployment.

That offensive must, however, be methodically conducted.

II. Then there must be a *defensive,* after one has finished *scouting;* after one *holds* the ground necessary to the protection and preparation of the main body's action, and after one has nothing left to do but to keep it.

So regarded, the tactics of the advance guard make an appeal to the *resisting power* of a force, and to its ability to *last out.* They utilize to this end everything which may further these two distinct properties, positions, "points d'appui," long-range fire, manœuvring to the rear, in retreat.

III. Lastly comes an *offensive* again, in order to immobilize an adversary who might otherwise get away or manœuvre.

The *composition of the advance guard:*

This composition is determined by the threefold mission an advance guard has to fulfil:

In order to reconnoitre, you obviously need cavalry; but infantry and artillery are equally

needed in order to overcome the first resistance of the enemy, to reach his main body, and to compel the latter to deploy.

In order to *cover* and to *last out*, firing troops, moreover troops firing at a long range, are, as we have seen, indispensable; they must be capable of resistance, of holding their ground strongly: hence the need of infantry and artillery.

In order to *fix* the enemy, the offensive must obviously be resorted to and must be carried far enough to threaten the adversary at close quarters, otherwise he may escape: the more need for infantry.

We conclude, therefore, that the advance guard must be composed of all three arms, if it is to become that organ of information, of protection, and of preparation, which we desire.

The advance guard, then, needs all three arms. And as it acts independently, it must also be under a single commander.

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Of the advance guard with its threefold mission:

To inform;
To protect;
To come up to, and keep in touch with, the enemy;

we might also say that it is necessary up to the very moment when the main body goes into action, that is, until the main body has actually deployed and begun to act upon the enemy.

We insist on this point because people willingly acknowledge, in practice, an advance guard to be necessary in front of a *marching* column; they are less prepared to acknowledge that necessity where an *assembled* force is concerned; they deny it altogether concerning a *deployed* force.

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In countries with numerous communications, one ought not to manœuvre a priori against an enemy in possession of his freedom of movement. One ought to begin by getting hold of him; once that preliminary condition has been fulfilled, the opportunity will arise to carry out a manœuvre the effect of which shall be safe and certain.

The advance guard, which has fulfilled the first part of the task, getting information, must then fulfil the second, keeping a hold on the adversary, keeping actually in touch with him, so as to make it possible to organize a *well-founded* and *right* manœuvre, that is, a manœuvre *corresponding to the circumstances*. The advance guard attacks the enemy if he tries to escape. It resists by means of a

defensive and of a retreating manœuvre if he attacks.

ADVANCE GUARD, IN RETREAT.—His [1] tactics are an excellent example of the tactics which should be employed by retreating outposts. The line of retreat should be safeguarded; the main points of it occupied in time; such movements of the enemy as might endanger it, watched; fighting troops which one intend to withdraw should not be reinforced. Such troops should successively retire under protection of supporting troops. Finally, the main body must fall back without the enemy perceiving the movement (so far as this is possible), and covered by a rear guard which later on falls back upon and is received by the main force.

Retreating advance guards must fight, while keeping in mind their twofold task: *observing* the enemy and *delaying* him in his *approaches*.

Advance guards delay the enemy, by compelling him to take up fighting dispositions, to assemble, to deploy, to use his superiority in order to outflank.

The nature of the ground, as well as the distance of the force to be covered, determine, of course, how long the resistance must last;

[1] General Cervoni's in the Voltri affair (Italian Campaign of 1796).

however, under any circumstances, the losses will depend upon the resistance one has decided to make. And it is also for this reason that resistance must not be resorted to whenever the necessary time can be secured in another way.

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The difficulties of a running fight are: (1) the danger of being turned: once turned, the advance guard no longer covers the main body; it may, besides, be cut off; (2) the danger of being assaulted from too short a distance, which makes it very difficult to extricate the fighting troops; and (3) the necessity of fighting by fire and from a great distance, in order to act on the enemy at long range.

The arrangement of forces corresponding to these various conditions generally consists in having each of the successive positions occupied by a relatively strong body of artillery, in principle by all the guns available; and by infantry numbers proportionately sufficient to guard and support that artillery; while the remainder of the infantry prepare, and carry out the occupation of, the second position.

Numerous cavalry are also required to discover and parry outflanking movements.

They usually form the reserve on each position taken.

Thus an advance guard consisting of six battalions, six batteries, six squadrons, will, as a rule, bring up to the first position its six batteries, two or three battalions, and its six squadrons, while the other battalions occupy the second position, where the artillery will join them at a trot after leaving the first position; finally, the cavalry covers the retreat of the last infantry elements from the first position and afterwards resumes its rôle of a general reserve.

In an advance guard manœuvring in retreat so as to cover a manœuvre of the main body, as well as in an advance guard going ahead in order to find and seize the enemy, a strong body of cavalry, supported by artillery and infantry, is a necessary part.

THE ADVANCE GUARD. GENERAL REMARKS. —In the Napoleonic system, thanks to an organism designed to give security and kept at high tension and called "covering troops" or "general advance guard," a defensive concentration does not only mean a defensive battle, still less the successful occupation of a given position, but rather the power to parry the enemy's attack by some final manœuvre which will be defensive or offensive

according to circumstances, and will always be secure of its power of action. For instance, supposing it is one's business to execute a defensive manœuvre; the operation evidently involves the occupation of some position which has been chosen definitely beforehand. But there is no necessity that the troops should have been previously kept in the proximity of this position, for the organism designed to give security guarantees them, just at the moment when the need arises, the time and space to reach the position and to establish themselves there. If this arrangement of a general advance guard had been applied by Moltke in 1870 it would have permitted him further to extend the region over which the 2nd Army gathered upon the line; to bring up part of his forces further to the south, and, when the moment had come, to march towards the Neunkirchen-Homburg district to make use of a third road, that from Landau to Pirmasens, which road was, moreover, covered by the 3rd Army. He could have turned two army corps on to that road, and have thus lightened and improved his movements across a belt of country densely wooded and still difficult.

ARMIES, GROUPS OF.—An army, like an army corps, is nowadays a subordinate unit. It

does not involve creation, the exercise of an art, but simply execution. One has to rise higher and study the functioning of a group of armies. Then only do the accomplished facts reappear as a suitable field to exploration, to nourish our study and to provide our theories with some foundation.

ARMIES ORGANIZED.—After Metz and Sedan there remained no army in France worthy of that name, and yet, in spite of all, the enemy was compelled to a hard campaign of four months before he could get peace. Armies fully organized do not, therefore, represent the whole of a country's military resources.

ART OF COMMAND.—The art of command is not that of thinking and deciding for one's subordinates as though one stood in their shoes.

ART OF WAR.—The art of war, like every other art, has its theory and its principles, or it would not be an art.

The art of war does not consist for the highest officers and for the commanders of an advance guard in falling upon the enemy like a wild boar. In order to have a general common action there must be mutual under-

standing and there must be consultation and submission of the subordinate to a direction above himself, which direction is not limited to the drawing up of plans, but has the task also of effective command. What would one say of the conductor of some orchestra who, after having indicated what piece of music was to be played, should withdraw to a distance from the instruments, leaving to the executants the duty of starting the affair and arranging it among themselves as best they could manage it?

ARTILLERY. — The Austrian artillery had also proved very superior to the Prussian artillery in armament, in tactics and in training; they were, in consequence, superior in their fire. They inflicted on the successively arriving Prussian batteries losses which prevented the latter from keeping up the struggle. In spite of that, the Prussians conquered at the end of the day. Artillery action is not, then, any more than cavalry action, of such a decisive value as to settle finally the result of a battle.

In the future we shall frequently see artillery action remain indecisive, on account of the range and of the difficulty of observation with smokeless powder. Should we check our attack, for that reason, until our artillery

has secured an undisputable superiority? Obviously not.

ARTILLERY, HEAVY.—Side by side with the quick-firing light field-piece are to be found in all the German army corps a group of howitzers of 10½ centimetres calibre, and in certain army corps batteries normally with out-teams, but furnished with harness, and consisting some of mortars of 21 centimetres, which are destined to attack those of our forts designed to check invasion and our small places; others (in greater number) are howitzers of 15 centimetres, with a projectile of 40 kilogrammes or so and a strong charge. What is expected of this artillery?

1. To master the field fortification of the adversary.

2. To reinforce their own field organization.

3. To master the field artillery of the adversary.

4. To crush under a fire which is incontestably superior the objective chosen for the decisive attack. The Saint Privat of the future will not only be bombarded by the artillery of the guard of the 12th and of the 10th Corps, but also by the mobile heavy artillery attached to the army as a whole.

In this fashion there is added a new element

to the breaching power of field artillery in order that it may master that power of the defensive which is certainly growing every day. It is for the same reason that the 38,000 men who constitute the personnel of the heavy batteries are called to take their place in action in the field instead of waiting until they are attacked in their fortified places of Strasburg or Metz or they themselves are called to attack Toul or Epinal. There you have another development of that constant principle of *economy of force*, which counsels not the specialization of forces nor their affectation in some invariable fashion to one only particular task, but throws them all in, whatever be their type, to the decisive act of war which is *battle*.

ASCENDANCY IN MORAL.—Thus do we sum up the conduct of General Alvensleben in the first place, and the next that of Prince Frederick Charles, a conduct which, as we see, was made up of a superb use of reason accompanied by virile decisions and that gift of command which can still animate the troops at the last stage of exhaustion. We have seen what use of forces was made corresponding to such a tactic. In the uninterrupted race for moral ascendancy, even though they could not hope for a decisive

success,[1] it was their business to repeat the necessary acts of aggression all day long, and that in the absence of any strong reserves. The thing was done by a series of isolated actions in the lack of a general combination. The using up of units piecemeal, which is always an evil, became on this occasion a necessary evil. The commanders suffered that evil while reducing it to its least possible limits. It was necessary to present certain units before others could arrive. They did so, but not without making sure that each effort should have a strength which might allow it to hope at least for a result. Thus a brigade was not launched squadron by squadron or battalion by battalion, but in its entirety. In the absence of a great general movement, which had had to be given up, they brought to bear what we may call partial general movements.

We have seen by what fortunate decisions upon the field of battle itself Alvensleben and Frederick Charles corrected the imperfect dispositions taken at Pont-à-Mousson or at Herny; and by what constantly offensive posture they had not only conjured the defeat which threatened them, but saved a strategic manœuvre which had been designed without a base and without security for its action.

[1] At Gravelotte.

By their continuous aim at a moral ascendancy which was to be maintained at all costs, they had imposed their decision, which was to check their adversary. It was a victory of *moral*, compact of energy and of action, upon their side, singularly facilitated, one must admit, by the absence of will on the part of their adversary.

ATTACK.—The actions round Wysokow show what conditions of ground are required for attack. The Austrian attack penetrated into the village because it was strongly supported by artillery, that is undeniable; but also, and above all, because it had at its disposal covered avenues of approach, defiladed ways of access, which brought the attacking forces under shelter from enemy fire up to 300 or 400 yards from their objective. A sound attacking direction is one which provides covered approaches for infantry, and which makes it possible to use both arms (artillery and infantry) against a common objective, with that full development of the means of action which is derived from numerical superiority.

With modern arms, of which we have seen the full power on the ground of Nachod, the Austrians suffered their heaviest losses when they retreated after an unsuccessful attack,

or when they abandoned a position they had lost. It was less costly to them either to advance in attack or to keep on the defensive. Hence the two principles which command modern tactics: *any attack once undertaken must be carried home; defence must be supported with the utmost energy;* those are the most economical policies. These principles must prevail in practice; they make it, moreover, absolutely imperative for the directing mind, the commander, to know, to foresee and to solve the difficulties which the attack is bound to meet; not to undertake any attack that cannot be carried home, that cannot be *organized* and *brought up* under cover, *prepared, supported, guarded* up to the last moment.

ATTACK, DECISIVE.—Theoretically *a well-conducted battle is a decisive attack successfully carried out.*

Nevertheless we must acknowledge that, besides the ultimate execution of decisive attack, such an attack must be:

1. Well directed by means of scouting;
2. Secondly, prepared; and,
3. Thirdly, protected and utilized; in view of the enemy being otherwise able first to conceal his disposition; secondly, to alter them; thirdly, to impede our preparations;

and, fourthly, to make similar preparations.

Hence the necessity of a series of dispositions (of security-dispositions, if you will), the object of which will be, *first*, to reconnoitre the enemy; *secondly*, to immobilize him; and, *thirdly*, to paralyze him and absorb his activity.

Such dispositions are included in what is termed the first frontal attack, which is rather the *preparation* of *battle* than battle itself.

But *reconnoitring* that enemy, wherever he shows himself, requires large forces; *immobilizing* him requires large forces: you cannot stop him with nothing; and *paralyzing* him, *holding* him, requires, again, both large forces and time.

Finally, the frontal attack, to which one may have intended devoting but small numbers (so as to keep faithful to theory), in practice will absorb the *largest part of our forces*, as well as take up *the largest part* of the *time*, at our disposal; while our decisive attack only uses the smaller part of our troops and lasts but for a short space of time; hence a second optical delusion, which has confirmed (in superficial minds) the belief that the frontal attack was the true battle; for their judgment was based on *quantities* (forces and time), not on *results*—an error which thus brought them back to the doctrine of parallel battle.

Let us beware of such superficial views. Even should theory fail when applied by unskilful hands, should the essentials of theory be lost in accessories or its foundation be obscured by detail, history and reason have shown us that there is in battle only one valid argument: the decisive attack. This alone is capable of ensuring the result desired, for it overthrows the enemy.

Decisive attack is the supreme argument used by modern battle, which itself is a struggle between nations fighting for their existence, for independence, or for some less noble interest; fighting, anyhow, with all their resources and passions. These masses of men and of passions have to be shaken and overthrown.

If we study in detail the attack of Macdonald's [1] column, for instance (which includes all the *phases* of the *tragic act* of battle), we should find its attack:

1. Prepared (*a*) by a charge of 40 squadrons (the object of which was to make it possible for the attacking column to assemble); (*b*) by fire from 102 guns (in order to halt and shake the enemy).

2. Carried out by 50 battalions (22,500 men).

[1] At Wagram.

We should find that mass of infantry unable to act by fire, in view of the formation it has taken; unable to use the bayonet. The enemy nowhere awaits the shock. Finally, it does no harm whatever to the adversary; on the contrary, it suffers a great deal itself; it was reduced to 1500 victorious men when it reached its objective, Süssenbrunn.

In summing up, we should find that this *decimated* force was able to beat the *decimating* one; moreover, this decimated force determined the forward movement of the whole army, the victory on the wide Marchfeld.

This result was secured not by physical means—these were all to the advantage of the vanquished—it was achieved by a purely moral action, which alone brought about decision and *a complete decision.*

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Owing to its continually offensive attitude, the *preparation* has finally succeeded in throwing back the enemy's first lines, in carrying the enemy's advanced posts and in immobilizing him by the series of its efforts and by threatening him with close attack. It holds him exposed to a more violent attack.

But it is by this time in a state of exhaustion; the greatest part of its reserves are in action, units are mixed, the number of officers is reduced, ammunition begins to grow scarce.

The preparation is now confronted by the main enemy forces, by important obstacles; a ground swept by fire or strong "points d'appui" (strongly occupied and only to be approached with difficulty).

In front, there is a (so to speak) "impassable" zone; no defiladed ways of access are left; a hail of bullets sweeps the ground in front of the first line. But success has not yet been secured; "nothing is done so long as something remains to be done" (Frederick). The laurels of victory are at the point of enemy bayonets. They must be plucked *there;* they must be carried by a fight hand to hand, if one really means to conquer.

To reinforce the troops of preparation in order to attain the result would be without effect: a battle of parallel lines would begin and would remain *powerless.*

To *run away* or to *fall on,* such is the unavoidable dilemma. To fall on, but to fall on in *numbers* and *masses:* therein lies salvation. For numbers, provided we know how to use them, will allow us, by means of the physical superiority placed at our disposal, to get the better of that violent enemy fire. Having more guns we can silence his own; it is the same with rifles, the same with bayonets, if we know how to use them all.

Ground must next be considered. It

determines the objective of the decisive attack. Up to 800 or 600 yards the attack suffers heavily, and has little effect of its own.

Our art consists, then, in reducing this belt to the smallest limits, and in launching the attack from as close to the enemy as possible, and ground is the element which furnishes us with our means.

On the other hand, the attack once launched must proceed rapidly, and yet for that purpose it needs ground devoid of obstacles, which does *not* mean devoid of cover. The ideal conditions are a ground open but rolling, and the important point is the rapidity of the advance. Ground, we see by this, determines, as I have said, the point of attack, for if we have combined these two conditions, the power of attacking from close by and of rapid advance, the admitted difficulties of a central attack disappear.

The Rôle of Artillery.—To make a breach on the front of attack, to open the way for infantry, to keep it clear once it is open, to sacrifice itself if need be in order to enable infantry to perform its task, to watch the batteries and counter-attacks of the enemy; such is at this moment the mission of our artillery.

To this end, the largest possible number of guns enters into action towards the point of

attack. There can never be too many guns, there are never enough of them.

All the artillery groups placed near that point, those which would still be available and could enter in line: corps artillery, the artillery of the infantry divisions, of the cavalry divisions, of second-line army corps, those which have taken part in the preparation and which are now without an object; all of them work in the same direction, by means of a fire both violent and suddenly unmasked, the intensity of which continually increases.

In order to fulfil this task, it is enough that artillery should *see;* all the batteries which can act from their position must be left where they are. They must, on the contrary, be moved if they cannot see. Such are the tactics to be adopted.

A quarter of an hour's quick fire by a mass of artillery on a clearly determined objective will generally suffice to break its resistance, or at any rate to make it uninhabitable and therefore uninhabited.

The mass of artillery must then open a quick fire a quarter of an hour before the infantry mass enters in line. Such will be the rule; artillery fire must begin later if the infantry attack, starting from a great distance,

needs a longer time before coming within efficient range for infantry fire.

Against what should fire be opened ? Against the obstacles which may delay the march of infantry.

The first obstacle is the enemy gun. It will be the first *objective* assigned to artillery masses.

Once superiority shall have been secured in that struggle, obstacles and shelters covering the road to that objective will have to be smashed, or at any rate made untenable. The second part of the same task of preparation will consist in destroying and riddling with projectiles the infantry occupying or surrounding them.

Once the road is open, it must be *kept clear ;* once the breach is made, the enemy must be prevented from filling it ; therefore one must be able to go on firing against the part of the enemy front which is our target until it shall be assaulted by the attacking infantry.

The success of the attack must also be ensured by striking at any kind of troops the enemy may oppose : fresh batteries, counter-attacks.

In order to fulfil this third rôle, the artillery masses prepare groups of batteries (called groups of attack and of counter-attack), designed to follow and support the infantry

columns, as well as to manœuvre in the directions which threaten danger.

The Rôle of Infantry —Artillery has shaken the enemy's resistance; infantry must now overthrow him. In order to decide the enemy to retreat, we must *advance* upon him; in order to conquer the position, to take the enemy's place, one must *go* to where he is. The most powerful fire does not secure that result. Here begins more particularly the action of infantry masses. They march straight on to the goal, each aiming at its own objective, speeding up their pace in proportion as they come nearer, preceded by violent fire, using also the bayonet, so as to close on the enemy, to be the first to assault the position, to throw themselves in the midst of the enemy ranks and finish the contest by means of cold steel and superior courage and will. Artillery contributes to that result with all its power while following, supporting, covering the attack.

In the presence of an enemy master of his own fire and free to use it against the oncoming mass, a formation, however skilful it may be, will not generally make it possible, of itself, to advance under fire over an open ground, not even to cross, under those conditions, spaces of any length; losses would be incurred which would break the organization

and above all the spirit of the troops, of the infantry mass.

To-day, even more than in the past, the art will consist, during this period of the march, in utilizing all the defiladed ways of access and all the cover provided by the ground. The formation to be given to the mass, far from aiming at symmetry, at harmony, at regularity, must only tend to enabling the greatest possible numbers to secure those advantages of cover which nothing can replace.

On the contrary, in the second phase of combat, from a distance of 600, 700, 800 yards from the previously reconnoitred enemy position, the mass is able to develop its whole power: firing-power and striking-power. The formations to be adopted must tend to make the most efficient use possible of these two means of action: to make one succeed the other without a hitch, so that the combined effects of fire and assault should be superimposed and added one to the other.

The consideration of what fire one may oneself receive now becomes a secondary matter; the troops are on the move and must arrive; moreover, there is but one means to extenuate the effects of enemy fire: it is to develop a more violent fire oneself,

capable at least of getting to ground and paralyzing the enemy; another means consists in rapid advance.

To march, and to march quickly, preceded by the hail of bullets; in proportion as the enemy is hard pressed, to bring forward more and more numerous troops, and, moreover, troops well in hand, such is the fundamental formula for the formations to be taken and tactics to be adopted.

A body of infantry formed in double line obviously fulfils the twofold condition of providing powerful fire and rapid advance. Therefore such a body will, for a certain time, be equal to the task. But the mass melts away while performing that task; it soon stops and becomes exhausted before reaching the position. Hence the necessity of having a second line which should be particularly strong, coming nearer and nearer to the first, designed to prevent the attack from receiving a check, to push the first line on ahead, to draw it along on to its destined position. We thus have the second-line battalion (or battalions) of the regiment in fighting order, launching (in order to make an end) into the more and more billowy, confused, mixed line, whole companies in close order (line or column) and fully commanded.

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To-day, as in the past, the attacking mass cannot succeed unless it possesses the firm will to reach its objective. Any force charged with carrying out a decisive attack must be full of Bugeaud's maxim: "When the moment has come to act, you must march on and meet your enemy with that energy and self-possession which alone enables a man to perform anything whatsoever."

Therefore we must have *vigour, speed, violence, no long halts,* and therefore a *quick pressure* from troops behind so as to urge forward the first-line troops. These must be the characteristics of action at that moment.

The Rôle of Cavalry.—At the very time when the crisis of the tragedy, the infantry attack, is developing, the squadrons of the attack suddenly appear out of a cloud of dust on the flank or in the rear of the position. They, too, have had to reach the ground where the fate of the day is to be settled, and, since distance is no obstacle to them, they have found sheltered ways of access which have enabled them to reach at any rate the external wing of the attack. They charge thence on anything that is still resisting among the enemy, or on enemy cavalry as it attempts to charge the attacking infantry, or on arriving enemy reserves as they come up.

For cavalry as well as for other arms, then, there is both a necessity and a possibility of acting, and this by means which must be entirely left to the commander's initiative, the object being to facilitate the decisive attack. That attack is a *victory for all.* It sometimes arises even from the apparently fruitless efforts of some, but in every case from the *concord between different arms,* from the *resultant of their converging efforts,* from an *assault delivered arm in arm.*

ATTACK, OBJECTIVE OF.—The *objective* of the attack must be *determined* beforehand. Taking the same things into consideration, namely, the space to be covered under enemy fire and the superior efficiency which has to be produced and maintained on the selected point of attack, we are led to the following conclusion: the first objective selected must be that point occupied by the enemy which is nearest to us and on which we may apply a numerical superiority, which should guarantee superior efficiency.

BATTLE.—As there is *direction, convergence* and a *result,* it may well be assumed that logic governs here, as everywhere: that it asserts its full rights; that it imposes itself in its

most ruthless vigour. There is such a thing as a theory of battle.

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A purely defensive battle is a duel in which one of the fighters does nothing but *parry*. Nobody would admit that, by so doing, he could succeed in defeating his enemy. On the contrary, he would sooner or later expose himself, in spite of the greatest possible skill, to being touched, to being overcome by one of his enemy's thrusts, even if that enemy were the weaker party.

Hence the conclusion that the *offensive* form alone, be it resorted to at once or only after the *defensive*, can lead to results, and must therefore *always* be adopted—at least in the end.

Any defensive battle must, then, end in an offensive action, in a thrust, in a successful counter-attack, otherwise there is no result. Such a notion will seem to some elementary; still it cannot be omitted without all the ideas one ought to hold on war becoming confused. This idea was ignored by the French army of 1870, otherwise they would not have given the name of a victory to the battles of the 14th and 16th of August, 1870, and others which *might have become victories*, but certainly did not deserve that name at the stage in which they were left. To use a term current

at the time, " positions had been maintained," and no more. Nothing could be expected to come of such battles. *Maintaining a position* is not synonymous with being victorious; it even (implicitly) prepares defeat if one stops there, if an offensive action is not resorted to.

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Joseph de Maistre wrote: " A battle lost is a battle one thinks one has lost; for," he added, " a battle cannot be lost physically." Therefore, it can only be lost morally. But then, it is also morally that a battle is won, and we may extend the aphorism by saying: *A battle won, is a battle in which one will not confess oneself beaten.*

BATTLE, PARALLEL AND OF MANŒUVRE.— *Parallel* battle or battle of *lines*, in which one goes into action at all points, and in which the commander-in-chief expects a favourable circumstance, or a happy inspiration (which are not usually forthcoming) to let him know the place and time when he must act;—unless he leaves all this to be decided by his lieutenants, while the latter, again, leave this to their own subordinates. So that in the end the battle is won by the privates: an *anonymous battle.*

Let us analyze this theory of "the parallel battle." What do we discover?

Troops go into action everywhere; once in action, they are supported everywhere. In proportion as forces are used up, they are renewed and replaced. Such a battle consists in putting up with a constant, a successive, wear and tear, until the result ensues from one or more successful actions of particular combatants—subordinate commanders or troops. Such actions all remain second-rate, because their decision never involves more than a portion of the forces engaged. As for the whole, it is but a chain of more or less similar combats, in which command is broken up, has to specialize the means of action in detail, and in which the issue must proceed from a sum (or excess) of successful local results which escape the direction of the commander.

This is therefore a battle of an inferior kind when compared to the battle of manœuvre which makes an appeal to the commander-in-chief's action, to his manœuvring ability, to a sound and combined use of *all* the forces present; which achieves a true economy of those forces, by attempting to concentrate effort and mass on one selected point and neglecting all else; which remains to the very last a combination—due to one command—

of combats varying in intensity, but all aiming in the same direction to produce a final resultant: an *intentional, resolute and sudden action of masses acting by surprise.*

The parallel battle uses inferior methods, and is bound to lead to inferior results.

Its weakness lies in the fact that attack, in such a battle, develops everywhere with equal force, and ends by exerting a *uniform* pressure against a defender who in his turn offers a *uniform resistance;* a resistance which, however, is more efficient than the pressure, because the defender disposes of special advantages such as shelter, fire-power, etc., which the assailant does not possess to the same degree.

Such a battle means bringing up forces piecemeal; it soon amounts to throwing drops of water into a sea.

We have a wave breaking against a strong dam. The dam will not be broken.

Suppose, however, we should, as a result of some mental vision, discover a crack in the wall of the dam; a point of inadequate resistance. Or, again, should we manage, by means of a particular combination of forces, to add to the rhythmical and methodical action of the wave some kind of water-hammering capable of breaking the wall of the dam on some one point, *then* the balance

would be upset; the mass would rush in through the breach made, and carry the whole obstacle. Let us look for the crack, for the point of inadequate resistance, or let us organize to this end our water-hammering on one point of the enemy line; we shall thus attain the one result.

That is the "battle of manœuvre."

Defence, once it has been overthrown on one point, collapses on all. Once the resistance has been pierced, the whole line falls.

In the parallel battle, tactics attempt, consciously or unconsciously, to break the other party's resistance by slowly and progressively using up enemy forces. To this end, fighting is kept up everywhere. It is fed everywhere. Reserves are devoted to this *supporting* task. Reserves become a kind of reservoir of forces from which one draws what is necessary to making up the wear and tear which continues and must be repaired. Art consists in still keeping a reserve up to the point where the enemy has none left, so as to be able to have the last word in a struggle where wear and tear is the only valid argument. In such a battle, however, reserves have no place allotted to them beforehand; they have to be everywhere, so that it should be possible to use them according to our needs—that is, to continue the action on the

whole front. They afterwards scatter and melt away in a combat where a favourable circumstance is always hoped for, without it being known where and when such a circumstance may be found, and where their only effect is to prevent the struggle from coming to an end.

In the battle of manœuvre, on the other hand, the reserve is a *club*, prepared, organized, reserved, carefully maintained in view of carrying out the one act of battle from which a result is expected—the decisive attack. The reserve is spared with the utmost parsimony, so that the instrument may be as strong, the blow as violent as possible.

Such a reserve must be hurled in the last instance, without any thought of sparing it; with a view to carrying by force a selected and well-determined point. It must therefore be hurled as one block, in the course of an action exceeding in violence and energy all the combats of the battle, under the conditions demanded by *surprise*, *mass*, and *speed*. We envisage a single goal; a *determining act* in which *all* our forces take part, either in order to *prepare* it, or in order to *carry it out*.

The notion of a parallel battle was the ruling one in the French army of 1870; or rather it was an *absence of notion* regarding the

conduct of battle as a whole. Adequate proof of this may be derived from official and private narratives recording the struggles of that time. The Germans are always supposed to have achieved victory, because numerous reinforcements came up, as though these numerous reinforcements had not been troops reserved and brought up in the numbers and in the time required to produce that demoralizing effect which overthrows an army!

This way of putting things shows clearly enough that, if such fresh troops had arrived on *our* side, they would have been used as *reinforcements*—not as a means of undertaking a special and decisive action which no one contemplated.

BATTLE, MODERN.—What has been said about the philosophy of battle and about the arguments advanced regarding it remain true in the main, even in these modern days of long range, rapid fire, and vast numbers, because it is the same moral being, man, who is fighting; the forces in action are ruled by the same mechanics.

The various acts of battle will, therefore, remain the same: to prepare, to carry out, and to utilize the decisive attack.

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The first object of preparation is to supply the commander with the intelligence he needs in order to *direct and execute*, with full knowledge of the case, the decisive act of battle. Considered from that standpoint, it involves seeking the objective to be struck, for the means and ways leading to that objective, as well as determining the enemy's situation. The part it plays in thus looking for direction and information has to be carried on until the moment when the decisive act is performed—that is obvious—but it also begins sometimes several days before the battle. If one has to deal with large units, for instance, with whole armies, the information collected during these days concerning the situation and distribution of enemy forces, already indicate how one's own forces must be distributed, and largely determine the direction and importance of the decisive attack, although it is impossible to think of altering one's plan at the last moment.

Thus the strategical advance guards of Napoleon (more particularly those of 1806 and 1809) supply by their intelligence service a basis for the Napoleonic manœuvres, as well as providing later on, by their resistance and their hold over the enemy, the pivot around which that manœuvre develops.

But, besides what has just been said,

preparation must also *conceal* the direction and moment of the decisive attack; it must *cover* the organizing process: hence a new mission, that of protecting and *covering* the attack.

Preparation must at the same time *maintain* the previously reconnoitred situation of the enemy, *deprive* him of the means and possibility of preparing a manœuvre on his part; therefore, immobilize him by depriving him of the physical possibility of assembling an adequate force which he might victoriously oppose to the effort of the decisive attack; to this end, undertake a number of *actions* against the enemy.

In order to fulfil this twofold task, preparation must attack the enemy wherever he shows himself, so as to inflict serious losses on him, to deprive him of his means of action, to paralyze him, to threaten him, which prevents him from removing his forces to some other place. Its attitude must therefore be a *resolutely offensive* one.

But it must at the same time keep him off if he becomes threatening, it must be *able to resist* and *know* how to do it. While acting, preparation must prepare the means of successfully defending itself.

To *conquer* and to *maintain* with ever-increasing vigour is its formula.

Preparation troops will in practice soon be found, not to start *one single action*, but to be fighting several partial actions, conducted independently of each other with the object of conquering the resisting centres of the enemy.

As the latter is also attempting to do the same thing (until he has been completely immobilized), or as he is trying to recapture the points he has lost, there results a series of offensive and defensive actions, with a view to disputing the points of the ground, and all this generally imparts to the combat of preparation a special kind of tenacity, of desperation, of length, producing among the enemy a wear and tear of strength and means of action, losses, physical and moral exhaustion, all of which are equally desirable results.

Hence also the duration of the combat of preparation which has been improperly termed a *dragging* fight; while it actually results in a constant offensive, carried on everywhere, moreover, under difficult conditions; in case of failure, it changes into a defensive prepared beforehand and kept up with desperation, so that it remains in either case the very reverse of a slack action.

To attack the *important points* of the ground, to carry them, to occupy them; to

defend them, if they are attacked; to *retake* them if they are lost; to make them a *new base* for new progress if the enemy does not attack them: such are the processes preparation-troops must continuously maintain, until the enemy gives up every hope of conquering and leaves the place, or until they stop of themselves as a result of complete exhaustion. But even in this latter case they have to establish themselves in front of the enemy, so as to threaten him or to drive him back if he attempts to advance.

As has, then, been seen, preparation consists in a multitude of partial combats, each of which, in order to secure success, to lead to decision, that is, to the conquest of the objective selected, involves a decisive act, a convergence towards the same point, at the same moment, of all available co-ordinated efforts. Such a decisive act will contain, in a lesser, but still certain proportion, the three phases involved by battle: *preparation*, *execution*, *utilization*. In the case of each of these phases, the use and formation of troops are directed by the principles which should command the corresponding acts in battle.

It is also certain that such a great number of actions cannot be directed by a single man. The commander-in-chief plays his part by

dividing the task of preparation between a certain number of subordinate officers, to the initiative of each of whom, according to his own means, he leaves the reduction of the enemy.

General Victor commands at Garnsdorf, General Claparède commands at Beulwitz.

The commander reserves to himself the main task, that of directing and carrying out the decisive attack, and he also reserves, in any case, the possibility of intervening up to the last moment with the help of general reserves.

Preparation finally ends in a general action along the whole front, in sometimes a very hard and often very long struggle. Therefore, although this operation should theoretically only absorb a minimum of forces, it requires in reality *serious sacrifices*, which the commander must make ungrudgingly, so long as the waste thus incurred does not endanger the subsequent phases and more particularly the success of the decisive act; sacrifices which he must make *early*, as the deployment of forces, that is, the process of establishing units facing their objectives, must take place out of the reach of guns, and therefore at a very great distance.

Preparation is, then, a multitude of partial

combats, the object of which generally is to conquer successively, on the field, "points d'appui" or commanding points, organized and transformed into resisting centres and starting-points for new offensive actions; each of these combats involving three acts—preparing, carrying out and utilizing a decisive action.

In such a preparation, what should be the part played by each different arm?

Part Played by the Three Arms

Artillery.—Artillery must obviously be the *first* to act, owing to its range, its mobility, and the fact that it can easily come into action and go out of it in order to proceed, when necessary, to some other place; moreover, it can act so as to *get hold of the enemy*.

Therefore the artillery of the main body, the largest part of which is marching close behind the head of the column, will speed up its movement. Protected by infantry, it reinforces the artillery of the advance guard.

What, then, are these bodies of artillery about to do?

The guns will *help* the advance guard in its mission, which consists in reconnoitring, immobilizing, and wearing down the enemy;

this implies taking the offensive; therefore guns will break the obstacles opposing infantry —" points d'appui," and enemy artillery.

As soon as progress becomes possible, the guns will avail themselves of that opportunity and advance in their turn in order to settle in a final way the fate of the enemy artillery. They will undertake to this end a struggle at a short range. This is the *artillery duel.* It is obviously a matter of the highest importance to secure as soon as possible a *superiority* in that duel between guns holding under their powerful fire the whole of the ground they can observe.

To this end, superiority of numbers must be secured immediately; a long line of fire must be immediately organized; all guns must be brought up, nothing must be kept in reserve. Such is first of all the tactical formulæ for gunners engaged in an artillery duel.

Once the enemy artillery has been overthrown or silenced, the guns must return to the task of *helping infantry,* by *preparing* the attack on the points which are the latter's objectives.

That preparation involves (as we shall see by and by, more particularly when studying the decisive attack) *clearing the ways of access,* the approaches leading to the objective, as

well as *breaching the objective; following up the attack.*

Opening a way for infantry on the whole front so as to enable it to reach decisive acts; *helping* it in these attacks, in these decisive acts; these are the tactics of artillery in the course of the preparation.

These two successive and different functions of artillery, first in the *artillery duel* and next the *infantry actions*, leads to a corresponding difference in the grouping of batteries. In the first case (artillery duel), divisional artilleries must attempt to join the corps artillery, under the effective or nominal command of the officer commanding the artillery of the army corps. All the batteries must then try to form a whole, *the artillery of the army corps* working in a common direction (which does not mean in a single place).

In the second case (infantry action, artillery in support of infantry), divisional artilleries, of course, remain under the orders of the generals commanding the divisions; they are reinforced by all or part of the corps artillery, which thus becomes an artillery attached to infantry under the orders of generals commanding the divisions. The whole artillery of the army corps tends to become divisional,

and therefore to dividing itself and acting in two or three directions, those of the divisions.

Moreover, in proportion as arms are improved (quick-firing rifles and guns), infantry is compelled, when advancing, to move under cover, at least from gunfire; to this end, infantry has to utilize all practicable defilades and to follow them for the longest time possible. The *necessity of cover* increases every day.

But these ways of access are easily paralyzed nowadays *by weak troops* occupying "points d'appui" and armed with quick-firing rifles, or enfilading with a few quick-firing guns (two or three). Formerly many guns were needed to produce an effect. To-day, a few suffice. Hence this consequence, that the numerous ways of access, more and more necessary to infantry, would be impracticable if infantry were not helped from close at hand by an artillery capable of putting out of action the resisting means of the enemy. The union of both arms has become more necessary than ever. It is only when preceded by shells which break obstacles and silence the fire of enemy guns, that infantry will manage to move even in small numbers along its avenues of approach. And as the divisional artillery, be it reinforced or not,

could not fire from one single central position along all these means of access in order to clear them, that artillery will often be brought to subdivide itself in order to follow and help infantry troops. Thus we shall have guns attached to a brigade or to a regiment, this being a temporary device which must not alter our organic constitution, but on the contrary must be made to show what elasticity and suppleness have to be displayed nowadays in managing an army. It is further obvious that the inconvenience resulting from the parcelling and apportionment of batteries becomes much smaller when we pass from a gun firing two shots a minute to a gun firing twenty.

One must nevertheless not lose sight of the fact that the moral effect, the characteristic of artillery, increases rapidly with the concentration of fire. It is only by means of an action *en masse* that one can even attempt to secure important and decisive results.

Moreover, artillery possesses in the highest degree the means of effecting *surprise*: it is able, as soon as it appears, to make effect follow upon menace without delay. The reality of the blow follows the first apparition of danger. It must see to it that its action keeps this characteristic, and even possesses

it, if possible, to an ever-increasing degree; to this end, destruction must be made to coincide with the entrance of guns in line, and, as few direct hits are wanted to put the enemy out of action, artillery must attempt from the moment of opening fire to bracket the objective widely.

Infantry.—Though it is artillery which begins the battle, it cannot do so unless it is safely protected. The alternative is too great a risk.

Infantry must therefore *open* the battle-field for artillery and constantly *cover* the batteries by occupying points wherefrom it can protect them.

The preparation-force must further immobilize the enemy. This makes it necessary for infantry to strike at the enemy, to *threaten him with a close attack*, with assault, and first of all to approach as near as the distance required for such an operation.

These efforts mainly devolve upon the *first-line troops*, as a result of the necessity of keeping the others covered at a distance, of reserving them in order to maintain and supply the preparation.

They cannot be directed by a high command, nor by a commander acting *from the rear* and sending up troops. Yet these first-

line operations cannot succeed without having forces at their disposal. It therefore behoves officers commanding first-line units (companies, battalions) to display initiative and understanding in order to *combine* the action of their forces, however disorganized they may be, against the objectives to be successively carried; in order to reduce to a minimum such forces as are holding the conquered points of the ground, and to use the rest of their forces against the points which have still to be conquered.

Once progress has become impossible, they must try and attain by their fire the enemy artillery and organize their forces in order to drive back the enemy's attempts; this will be the last phase of preparation, until the moment when decisive attack is to be carried out.

BATTLE, PLAN OF.—All acts of battle should tend to:

1. *Preparing* that conclusion; be they called the action of an advance guard, frontal attack, artillery duel, encounter of cavalry, they cannot be studied and conducted alone, but only in so far as they prepare the conclusion;

2. *Carrying out* that conclusion; and

3. *Utilizing* it by pursuit, so as to destroy the fallen enemy.

Therefore, and from the outset, it is necessary to *make a plan* involving such a *succession of efforts* and a *corresponding distribution of forces.*

CAVALRY.—The Prussian cavalry [1] remained in action right up to the end. After breaking the attempts made by the enemy in order to debouch from the wood, they attacked the enemy artillery, captured three guns, and afterwards carried out the pursuit. Although their professional value was inferior to that of the Austrian cavalry, they knew how to fulfil their mission in the battle, how to act in compliance with the advance guard's tactics; above all, they were handled by a commander who utilized them to the utmost even to the very close of the action.

CAVALRY, IN ACTION.—As far as the cavalry action south of Wysokow [2] is concerned, both parties have claimed victory. Both may be right, if that action be only considered in itself. As a matter of fact, the Austrian cavalry was proved to possess dash, manœuvring efficiency, undeniable professional value. But they were not properly com-

[1] At Nachod, in 1866.
[2] In the same action, Nachod, 1866.

manded. The Prussian cavalry were more cautious, less well trained: they had the same pluck, the same quickness, the same versatility in manœuvring. And they were commanded. They showed tactical ability. If we only consider the *result*, it was they who obtained the victory. Two cavalry forces do not fight in order to find out which is the better force of the two. There is always a general situation to be considered, a tactical goal to be reached. For the Austrian cavalry, as well as for the Austrian infantry, the object here was to reach the approaches of the Nachod pass. They failed to do so. For the Prussian cavalry, as well as for the Prussian infantry, the object was to protect that issue. They secured that result.

Among other mistakes, the Austrian cavalry were faulty in omitting to scout, to protect themselves in the direction of Wysokow; hence a decisive surprise. The general use made of cavalry by either party leads to a similar remark. General Steinmetz had his whole cavalry (about twelve squadrons) on the battle-field. The Austrian commander, who had more than thirty squadrons at his disposal, only managed to send five into action. He had numbers on his side; yet it was by numbers that his cavalry were beaten.

CAVALRY CORPS.—The authorities did well, after the experiences of 1812 and of 1866, to give up the permanent organization of cavalry corps, which are difficult to feed, clumsy to manœuvre, and generally come up too late. Nor should we to-day be led to reconstitute the same at the opening of a war. We have not to envisage scouting over great distances such as those of the Palatinate in 1870, considering the effectives actually assigned to the function of covering and the distances which separate the opposed covering screens. There are but twenty-seven kilometres from Château-Salins to Nancy. To employ such corps in order to turn one or other of the wings of the enemy's covering screen would only lead one on to a lengthy enterprise which doubtless will be without result. On the other hand, cavalry used in masses will fulfil to-day as in the past (1806), as a covering or as a manœuvring advance guard, the rôle of a highly mobile large reserve capable of reinforcing a point which is about to yield or of parrying a turning movement. Even after the first encounters, when the opposing armies shall have taken the field, one must use cavalry masses to obtain the first information, and this only an unquestionable numerical superiority can procure.

CHARACTERS OF WAR. Were I to speak about strategy and general tactics in Brussels instead of in Paris, my study would bear on a particular form of war. The situation of Belgium is known to you: a neutrality guaranteed by Europe, which is perhaps nothing more than a word, but has, in any case, hitherto saved the existence of that little State; further, the immediate neighbourhood of two great Powers, Germany and France, from neither of which does any serious military obstacle separate that State, by either of which it might be easily conquered if the other neighbour, or Europe as a whole, did not intervene in the struggle. The special theory of war that would have to be presented to the Belgian Army would have a well-determined object, namely that of delaying as much as possible the advance of the invading neighbour. The study would then consist in finding out how the Belgian Army can perform such a part, by avoiding the *decision* by arms and *adjourning* the judgment of battle.

Such a conclusion would necessarily influence the whole military state of the nation: organization, mobilization, armament, fortification, as well as the instruction of the troops, not excluding the training of the company and even of the individual private.

If from Brussels we proceed to London, we again find a different situation, different ambitions. Those are equally familiar to you. There you would find an insular situation which ought to be maintained intangible by a *protecting* organization; also the ambition of maintaining and developing an Empire beyond the seas and in both hemispheres. This would require another way of handling the problem, another theory of war.

So, again, in Madrid. Every idea of territorial extension on the Continent is temporarily discarded by Spain in view of its geographical situation, of the nature of its frontiers, of its political, financial state, etc. . . . What does, then, such a country request from its army? The maintenance of the *integrity of national territory*. Would not in that case the best lesson on the art of war be derived from reading certain pages of the history of Spain from 1808 to 1814?

The same is true of Rome, or Berne. Each country finds itself in a different situation, requiring a distinct handling of the problem.

COMMANDMENT.—An army which desires to conquer must be provided with a factor of the first order, *command:* and the man who would undertake the conduct of battle must possess a certain gift: that of *commanding*.

To think and to will, to possess intelligence and energy, will not suffice for him; he must possess also the "imperative fluid" (De Brack), the gift of communicating his own supreme energy to the masses of men who are, so to speak, his weapon; for an army is to a chief what a sword is to a soldier. It is only worth anything in so far as it receives from him a certain impulsion (direction and vigour).

"The Gauls were not conquered by the Roman legions, but by Cæsar. It was not before the Carthaginian soldiers that Rome was made to tremble, but before Hannibal. It was not the Macedonian phalanx which penetrated to India, but Alexander. It was not the French army which reached the Weser and the Inn, it was Turenne. Prussia was not defended for seven years against the three most formidable European Powers by the Prussian soldiers, but by Frederick the Great."

These are Napoleon's words. What would he not have written, and still more rightly, had he included in his enumerations that dazzling period of history, the fascinating memory of which will live through future centuries under the name of "the Napoleonic epic," and to which he gave all its life by his own gigantic personality!

Great results in war are due to the commander. History is therefore right in making generals responsible for victories—in which case they are glorified; and for defeats—in which case they are disgraced. Without a commander, no battle, no victory is possible.

Is it not again this influence of the commander, the very enthusiasm derived from him, which alone can explain the unconscious movements of human masses, *at those solemn moments when, without knowing why it is doing so, an army on the battle-field feels it is being carried forward as if it were gliding down a slope.*

It is, moreover, easy to perceive why such an influence is necessary. Let us come to that point. When the moment arrives for taking decisions, facing responsibilities, entering upon sacrifices—decisions which ought to be taken before they are imposed, responsibilities which ought to be welcomed, for the initiative must be secured and the offensive launched—where should we find a man equal to these uncertain and dangerous tasks were it not among men of a superior stamp, men eager for responsibilities? He must indeed be a man who, being deeply imbued with a will to conquer, shall derive from that will (as well as from a clear perception of the only means that lead to victory) the strength to

make an unwavering use of the most formidable rights, to approach with courage all difficulties and all sacrifices, to risk everything; even honour—for a beaten general is disgraced for ever.

"It is difficult to appreciate correctly what *moral strength* is required to deliver—after having completely thought out the consequences—one of those great battles upon which the history of an army and of a country, the possession of a crown depend." So wrote Napoleon. He added that, "generals who give battle willingly are seldom found"; and "a morally strong personality must be understood to mean not one who is only possessed of strong emotions, but one whose balance is not upset by the strongest possible emotions" (Clausewitz).

Let us salute, too, that sovereign power of the commander, just as he will be saluted by drums and bugles when appearing on the battle-field; a power necessary to the organization of the whole, of the final thrust, and alone capable of fixing fortune.

Let us at the very beginning of our study make note of that capital factor: the commander's personal action. No victory is possible unless the commander be energetic, eager for responsibilities and bold undertakings; unless he possess and can impart

to all the resolute will of seeing the thing through; unless he be capable of exerting a personal action composed of will, judgment, and freedom of mind in the midst of danger. These are natural gifts in a man of genius, in a *born* general; in an average man such advantages may be secured by means of work and reflection.

In order to manifest itself, such a personal action requires the *temperament of a chief* (a gift of nature), ability to command, inciting power, which teaching cannot provide.

The effects of that personal action are numerous, for by using such gifts (natural or acquired), it finds in the most *unlimited* use of forces a means of increasing the efficiency of such forces; it also transforms its instrument, giving birth, as it were, to officers and troops, *creating* an ability and devotion which, failing such spark or impulsion from above, would have remained sunk in mediocrity.

This task of the commander becomes an immense one where modern numbers are concerned. It is, indeed, seldom possible for a single man to fulfil it; several men are needed. This is the new conception which the French Revolution brought into war, by making the personal initiative of subordinate chiefs (all working in the same direction and complying with the same doctrine) concur

in setting up a complete direction of armies. It became, at any rate, a fully developed reality with the German armies of 1870.

One should remark in their headquarters the presence of the King; the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces with his great General Staff; of the German Princes; and also of the Minister of War, of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and of the Federal Chancellor. There, indeed, you have an example of command in nations going to war. The whole power of the Government accompanies the Commander-in-Chief, in order to put at his disposal all the resources of diplomacy, of finance, and of the national soil; in order that the military enterprise to which the nation has given all its energies, and one to which it proposes to devote all the power of its authorities, may succeed.

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The formula, "strike hard and strike at the main mass," does not sum up the whole of war, at least so far as the Higher Command is concerned. There is one essential condition from which the latter cannot escape, and that is, to strike all together, to co-ordinate. Lacking that, you get disaster.

COMRADESHIP.—The Germans fought at Spicheren with a mass of 60,000 men, splen-

didly bound together by the sole emotion of comradeship.

CONCENTRATION.—A concentration ought to be carried out in a region where the armies can be supplied, whether an offensive or a defensive follows upon the conclusion of that operation. It should take into account both the direction of attack and the line of retreat to be kept open. The same railway lines which carry the concentration into effect generally allow of an easy supply for the army, provided always that the retreat in case of check can be made over the most important part of the ground, and therefore that the zone of concentration should lie just in front of that region.

Our concentration ought to cover the frontier provinces menaced by invasion. Public opinion has too much influence to-day to allow the Government to leave those frontiers without defence. Further, were they to act thus, they would be depriving themselves of resources and territory, and they would lose ground which would have to be recovered. But the protection of these provinces is not identical with their occupation. One must reconcile this idea of protection with the necessity of all the troops being absolutely required to combine for decisive

actions. Therefore we must keep intact the principle of assembling all one's forces, and one must provide the guarantee desired for the threatened provinces either indirectly, as Moltke provided protection for southern Germany in 1870, or by the aid of covering troops.

To satisfy in one and the same system these political necessities and the military necessities as well, such are the fixed limits of the task imposed at the outset upon our staffs.

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The German concentration of the future will not be a reunion of forces directed to various ends. It is directed towards a manœuvre which has been planned a priori. It is an attack all planned out; its execution, in direction and in means already fixed. It will be preceded by the highest degree of preparation, in order to permit the advance against the enemy, and this preparation will be based, to conclude, upon resolution and will; that is, upon spiritual conditions which secure the initiative, and the subordination of the adversary, from the first. The whole thing is a constant effort to seize the direction of the struggle at the earliest possible moment. However highly these characteristics may be developed, we must remark that in order that the manœuvre

should lead to its military result—the overthrow of the adversary—it will have to strike hard and strike exactly in the right place. To that end there must be nothing about it haphazard. It must be fully informed, and the action must be planned with a determined direction strictly defined before it is undertaken. Further, it must be planned with common sense, and the direction chosen must be that which will produce the chief effect and where the army can wage battle with large results. Lacking such an end, rapidity of movement and initiative itself are worthless. Therefore let the direction be chosen beforehand upon considered reasons. The great European States have drawn up projects of concentration to be realized at the moment war breaks out. These plans are partly indicated by the lines of railway and the opportunities for detraining. They are also partly evident from the measures undertaken in time of peace. Further, there are documents, known either partially or as a whole, which allow one to reconstitute, partially or entirely, the projects which have been decided upon. Commerce and industry have increased the number and the efficiency of railway lines purely commercial in their object. Therefore :

1. It is no longer necessary for us to fully

employ all the railways which lead to the frontier. There are more than we need, both in their number and in the work they can do. On account of this it is possible to make a combination, or indeed several combinations, of the use one proposes to make of those lines.

2. The fact that the personnel is now fully instructed with a view to that object allows us to wait till the very last hour before drawing up our combination for the distribution of our forces. Here is a contrast to the position which existed in 1870. There has reappeared the power to create a concentration *at the last moment*, and by that very fact to create surprise, in the Napoleonic manner, if to the elastic use of railways one adds a combination of march by the roads.

COVERING TROOPS.—The organisation of a strong covering screen, once accomplished, will necessarily have its effect upon the events of the first days after the declaration of war.

DEFENCE OF A VILLAGE.—The distribution of troops devoted to the defence of a place includes a garrison, an occupying force, numerically as weak as possible; a reserve as strong as possible, designed for counter-

attacking and for providing itself, at the moment it goes into action, with a security-service which will guard it from any possible surprise.

The occupying numbers may be calculated on the following basis : at the moment when the enemy reaches the outskirts of the village, we oppose him with one rifle per yard to make resistance serious and adequate. The enemy can generally assault only one side of the outskirts of the village. It is only after measuring that part of the outskirts and organizing a central redoubt, that the numbers of the force attached to the direct defence of the village can be fixed. At Wysokow,[1] the force devoted to this task was the equivalent of three battalions.

This calculation must never lead to our devoting to the occupation of the " point d'appui " the whole force available, however weak that force may be ; part of it must always be kept in reserve for the counter-attack.

DIRECTION.—The power to command has never meant the power to remain mysterious, but rather to communicate, at least to those who immediately execute our orders, the idea which animates our plan.

[1] In the action of Nachod, in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866.

If any one ever had the chance of playing the mysterious rôle in war it was Napoleon. For his authority was beyond question, and he had taken upon himself to think out everything and decide everything for his army. Yet in his correspondence he always put his views and his programme for several days to come before the Commanders of his army corps. And if we call to mind a number of his proclamations we shall see that his very troops were made aware of the manœuvre he intended. Souvarov said exactly the same thing. Every soldier should understand the manœuvre in which he is engaged. He was convinced that one can get anything out of a force to which one speaks frankly, because such a force will understand what is asked of it and will then itself ask no better than to do what is required of it.

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General von Kirchbach,[1] commanding the 10th Division, had forestalled the column on the field of action; he had found his way, and had witnessed the loss of the Wäldchen and the cavalry action.

As soon as his troops arrived he ordered the general commanding the 19th Brigade to retake and occupy the Wäldchen, while he himself proceeded to Wysokow, which the

[1] At Nachod, as above.

Commander of the army corps had ordered him to occupy.

DISCIPLINE.—To be disciplined does not mean that one does not commit any breach of discipline; that one does not commit some disorderly action; such a definition works well enough for the rank and file, but not at all for a commander placed in any degree of the military hierarchy, least of all, therefore, for those who find themselves in the highest places.

To be disciplined does not mean, either, that one only carries out an order received to such a point as appears to be convenient, fair, rational or possible. It means that one frankly adopts the thoughts and views of the superior in command, and that one uses all humanly practicable means in order to give him satisfaction.

Again, to be disciplined does not mean being silent, abstaining, or doing only what one thinks one may undertake *without risk;* it is not the art of *eluding responsibility;* it means *acting* in compliance with orders received, and therefore finding *in one's own mind,* by effort and reflection, the possibility to carry out such orders. It also means finding in *one's own will* the energy to face the risks involved in execution. In a high

place, discipline implies mental activity and a display of will. Laziness of mind leads to indiscipline, just as does insubordination. In either case it is an error; a guilty act. Incapacity and ignorance cannot be called extenuating circumstances, for knowledge is within the reach of all who seek it.

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In a time such as ours when people believe they can do without an ideal, cast away what they call abstract ideas, live on realism, rationalism, positivism, reduce everything to knowledge or to the use of more or less ingenious and casual devices—let us acknowledge it here—in such a time there is only one means of avoiding error, crime, disaster, of determining the conduct to be followed on a given occasion—but a safe means it is, and a fruitful one ; this is the exclusive *devotion* to two abstract notions in the field of ethics : *duty* and *discipline ;* such a devotion, if it is to lead to happy results, further implies besides, as the example of General von Kettler shows us, *knowledge* and *reasoning*.

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Those words : *common action, union of forces,* mean the reverse of independent, isolated, or successive, action which would fatally lead to *dispersion*. It is obvious, therefore, that any one of the units which

is a component part of the whole force is not free to go *where* it wishes (union in space), nor to arrive *when* it likes (union in time); to allow itself to be directed by its chief's private views, however sound they may appear to be; to act on its own account; to seek the enemy and fight him *where* and *when* it likes—even should the undertaking be a successful one.

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The crime lay in the fact that Garibaldi,[1] after being ordered to join the Eastern Army, had not done so. He never thought of carrying out his orders. His conduct was dictated by his own personal views, by his craving for personal success.

No material impossibility prevented him from obeying, had he attempted to do so: the Pelissier Division remaining at Dijon would have sufficed to absorb General von Kettler's activity; the army of the Vosges might freely have joined the Eastern Army.

Garibaldi and General de Failly,[2] although their military origins were very different, reached the same result, disaster, by following the same ways: *mental indiscipline, neglect of*

[1] Near Dijon, in 1870.

[2] Also in 1870. He failed to execute an order to concentrate on Bitche early in the war.

military duty, in the strictest sense of the term.

DIVERSITY IN WAR.—In war there are none but particular cases; everything has there an individual nature; nothing ever repeats itself.

In the first place, the *data* of a military problem are but seldom *certain*; they are never *final*. Everything is in a constant state of change and reshaping. These *data*, therefore, only possess a *relative* value as compared to the absolute value of mathematical terms.

Where you have only observed one company, you find a battalion when you come to attack.

One regiment of 3000 rifles, if well cared for, represents, after a few days campaigning, 2800 rifles; less well managed, it will no longer include more than 2000. The variations in the *moral* of a force are at least as ample. How, then, compare two regiments with each other? Under the same name they represent two utterly different quantities. Illness, hardships, bivouacking at night, react on the troops in various ways. Certain troops after such an ordeal are soon only a force in name. They are nothing but columns of hungry, exhausted, sick men. Or you may

have a division still called "a division" though it shall have lost part of its batteries, etc. . . . The same is true of the tactical situation, which varies as seen by the one side or the other. The interest of one of the adversaries is not the mere reverse of the interest of the other: so with their tactics. Suppose one force has to escort a convoy, while the other has to attack it: could the manner of fighting be the same on both sides? Evidently not. On the same ground, under the same circumstances of time and place, one would have to proceed differently in each of these cases.

The same regiment, the same brigade, will not fight in the same manner when they have to carry out the pursuit of a beaten enemy and when they will have to meet a fresh adversary, although they will use in both cases the same men, the same rifles, the same numbers.

Again as regards two advance guard engagements: one can never be a mere repetition of another because, independently of the fact that the ground varies from one to the other, they are both governed by differences other than those of time and space.

The consequence of all this is that each case considered is a particular one, that it presents itself under a system of special

circumstances: ground, state of the troops, tactical situation, etc. . . . which are bound to impress upon it an absolutely original stamp. Certain factors will assume an additional importance, others a lesser one.

This absence of similarity among military questions naturally brings out the inability of memory to solve them; also the sterility of invariable forms, such as figures, geometrical drawings (*épures*), plans (*schemas*), etc. One only right solution imposes itself: namely, the application, varying according to circumstances, of fixed principles.

DOCTRINE OF WAR.—What is the *form* of this teaching sprung from history and destined to grow by means of further historical studies?

It appears in the shape of a *theory* of war which can be taught—which shall be taught to you—and in the shape of a *doctrine*, which you will be taught to practise.

What is meant by these words is the *conception* and the *practical application* not of a *science* of war nor of some limited *dogma*, composed of abstract truths outside which all would be heresy, but of a certain number of *principles*, the *application* of which, though they will not be open to discussion once they shall have been established, must logically vary according to circumstances while always

tending towards the same goal, and that an objective goal.

The doctrine will extend itself to the higher side of war, owing to the free development given to your minds by a common manner of seeing, thinking, acting, by which every one will profit according to the measure of his own gifts; it will further constitute a discipline of the mind common to you all.

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There are fixed principles to be applied in a variable way, according to circumstances, to each case; for each is always a *particular* case and has to be considered in itself: such is our conclusive formula for the time being. Now does not such a conclusion bring us back, on the field of practical application, to the very intellectual anarchy we had hoped to remedy by creating unity of doctrine and establishing a theory of war?

Not in the least. Whatever may be your present impression, you will soon find that, in applying fixed principles to various cases, concordance reappears as a consequence of a common way of facing the subject—a purely objective way.

From the same *attitude towards things* will first result *a same way of seeing* them, and from this common *way of seeing*, arises a common *way of acting*.

The latter will soon become itself *instinctive*: another of the results aimed at.

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A wild fowl flies up in front of a sportsman; if it goes from right to left, he fires in front and to the left; if from left to right, he fires in front and to the right; if it comes towards him, he fires high; if away from him, he fires low.

In each of these cases, he applies in a *variable* way the *fixed* principle: to get three points upon one straight line, his eye, the sight and the quarry, at the moment the shot takes effect.

Whence does he derive his method of application? Does he resort to discussion of the problem? He has not got the time. He unconsciously derives his method of application from the sight of his object under the particular surrounding circumstances: he swings from left to right, or the reverse, at a given speed; a purely objective process. And from seeing as quickly as possible, there naturally results a tension of all the means in one single direction; he has practised the art of acting rationally without reflecting.

What we need, then, in order to apply a principle, is to look at the object in itself under the conditions of the moment, and, so to speak, through the atmosphere of the

particular case characterizing the situation. Our own object is the enemy, on whom we desire to act in a given way according to the day, to the mission we have been given; we have to make reconnaissance of the enemy, or to pin him, or to delay him, or to strike, etc.

Thence—from the sole consideration of the object—must be derived, first by means of reasoning (when, as here, in this school we have to study), later when in the field, automatically our whole conduct, our whole manner of acting.

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A *doctrine* of war consists first in a common way of objectively approaching the subject; second, in a common way of handling it, by adapting without reserve the means to the goal aimed at, to the object.

ECONOMY OF FORCES.— The principle of economy of forces gives us the means of reconciling these two apparently contradictory conditions; to *strike with an assembled whole*, after having supplied *numerous detachments*.

The principle of economy of forces is the art of pouring out *all* one's resources at a given moment on one spot; of making use there of *all* troops, and, to make such a thing possible, of making those troops perma-

nently communicate with each other, instead of dividing them and attaching to each fraction some fixed and invariable function; its second part, a result having been attained, is the art of again so disposing the troops as to converge on, and act against, a new single object.

In practice the new [1] theory of war, based on the principle of economy of forces and characterized in the highest degree by initiative, attack, and well-conceived action has for its outcome the following :

1. Action in one direction (namely, that which is implied in the strategical plan) by means of tactics; that is, by using military means as skilfully as possible. For instance, once the direction of Voltri [2] had been abandoned, the army marched first on Montenotte, then on Dego; once Dego had been given up, on Millesimo; Millesimo having been settled, the army came back on Dego, etc.

2. In each of the successively adopted directions, *victory* is secured by using *all the forces,* or at least the *main body;* in the other directions, *safety* is ensured by as few troops as possible, their mission being not to beat the enemy, but to delay him, to paralyze him, to reconnoitre : so Cervoni in

[1] Revolutionary or Napoleonic.
[2] During Napoleon's Italian campaign of 1796.

face of Beaulieu, Massena at Dego, Serurier in face of Colli.

3. In strategy as in tactics, a decision is constantly enforced by mechanics, by applying to part of the enemy forces a main body made as strong as possible, by devoting to that task with the greatest possible care all the forces which have been freed elsewhere. Once this part of the enemy forces has been destroyed, another has to be dealt with promptly by again applying the main body, in order to be successively the stronger on a given point at a given time.

In order to do things in that way, *forces* must be constantly arranged according to a system :

1. On the periphery, a number of advance guards
   - (1) attacking in order to reconnoitre;
   - (2) to fix the enemy, to the benefit of
   - (3) the main body;
   - (4) or parrying an attack in order to cover the main body;

2. In the rear, the *main body* manœuvring in the direction of the objective aimed at.

We cannot be victorious everywhere : it will suffice for us if we are victorious on one point. We must fight everywhere else with

a minimum of forces in order to be overwhelming on *that* point. We must economize everywhere else, in order to be able to spend, regardless of loss, on the point where we desire to secure a decision; the *mass* must be applied there, and therefore be *made* and *reserved* beforehand.

EDUCATION OF THE COMMAND.—The characteristic feature to be noted in all the French Commanders who were sent to the relief of Frossard[1] was their completely passive attitude; they consistently awaited direction from without. If we find our French Commanders in that state of mind we must be concerned to discover the system which produced it in them.

The foundations of this system were essentially a false conception of the rights and duties of a Commander.

This conception merged the thoughts of the will of subordinates throughout a whole army in the thoughts of the will of its Commander-in-Chief. It took no account of distance, of time, of accident, nor even of the independent initiative of the adversary; yet these are all things which imperil it or demand in one fashion or another spontaneous decisions upon the part of subordinates.

[1] During the Battle of Spicheren.

From this there results an absolute centralization, wholly theoretic, opposed to practical needs, denying every inferior the right to think or to act without an order. Hence also there results in those inferiors an inveterate habit of blind obedience, inert, complete, and set up as a sovereign law. It involves inactivity, inaction, and at last the abandonment of the offensive idea, for the subordinate, left without action during the greater part of his career, cannot suddenly become a chief endowed with the faculty of decision. This method further suppresses personality and initiative even in the leaders below the Supreme Command. They also have only to wait for orders. Then they come themselves to neglecting the numerous daily necessities of life in the field which cannot be regulated by the Higher Command. They do not throw out sufficient guards; they do not scout and obtain information; they dare not use their cavalry. And this last catches the general evil and becomes imitative and timid when by chance it *is* sent on a reconnaissance. Soon there follows a complete blindness upon what the enemy may be at. Inaction leads to surprise, and surprise to defeat, which is after all only a form of surprise.

EVOLUTION OF WAR.—From 1813 onwards

the Germans organized upon a large scale that national war which had sprung from the French Revolution. At Waterloo it was their conscript recruitment, universally applied, which brought success to the British Army, based upon volunteer and paid recruitment, itself defeated by the French Army based upon restricted conscription. After Napoleon had laid down the direction of the strategy of national war, Clausewitz and Moltke made clear its foundations to their general staff. In the hands of this body the conduct of great masses could then be undertaken without difficulty. It was thus that the Prussian genius, though it created nothing, by giving the French ideas their most methodical and the widest possible development, by *manufacturing*, as it were, the war of masses upon a gigantic scale, reached the unprecedented success of Metz and Sedan and of Paris. In our own day this evolutionary process still continues in the Prussian State which has become the German Empire. The same idea of preparing for a gigantic struggle is carefully maintained. The organization for it is continually growing. New corps are created. Professional and intellectual development are assured upon the largest scale; the command is chosen with the most minute care. It is a clear warning to us of what the future will bring forth.

FIRE.— What do the present[1] German dispositions show?

They disclose first of all a theory: up to 800 yards, fire produces but a weak effect, and must therefore be resorted to as little as possible; at 800 yards it becomes decisive; an undisputable superiority must then be secured. Their practice follows from this theory: the dispersion and dropping out on the way of men and cartridges must be carefully avoided up to 800 yards. From that moment on, expenditure must be lavish, a *large number of rifles* being thrown together into line; on the other hand, riflemen must be *commanded*, brought up in *companies*, or at least in whole platoons, with a complete set of cartridges.

Such tactics are capable of ensuring the *efficiency*, *duration* and *violence* of fire required, owing to a constant direction given by a *commander previously taught* in training-camps to practise the technique of fire and owing to a direction received by *men previously exercised* in these same training-camps to practising the mechanism of fire in war.

Thus do exercises carried out in peace time (training-camps, grand manœuvres, etc.) prepare troops in the highest degree for

[1] In 1901.

performing on the battle-field the act of fighting by fire.

One can no longer engage with an unshaken adversary, as one could in former times, by merely appealing to energy. The most solid moral qualities melt away under the effect of modern arms, if one allows the enemy to use all his power. Attack is necessarily checked if the question of superiority of fire is not decided at a given distance. That superiority alone permits the attack to make new progress because it deprives the enemy of part of his means, strikes at his *moral*, reduces his effectives, consumes his munitions, destroys cover, and renders him incapable of making a full and complete use of his arms.

But since the struggle between the fire-power of either adversary has now become inevitable, we must prepare for it and organize it in time of peace, or it will not be capable of execution in time of war. We must be clear upon the results which we seek to obtain and the means by which we seek to obtain them: upon our method of command and upon what a given force can deliver.

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The 2nd battalion of Prussian 37th which had stood its ground alone against a large part of the Austrian efforts [1] had particularly checked

[1] At Nachod, as above.

these efforts by its fire during the whole morning. Yet it had fired only 32,000 cartridges. This meant an average of thirty-two cartridges per man. We see, then, that considerable results may be secured by consuming a relatively small and easily provided quantity of ammunition, provided the fire is well directed.

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Fire has become the decisive argument. The most ardent of troops, those the spirit of which has been enhanced to the highest degree, will always want to conquer ground by performing successive bounds, but they will meet with heavy difficulties and incur considerable losses whenever their partial offensive has not been prepared by effective fire. They will be thrown back on their starting-point, with still more severe losses. A superiority of fire, and, therefore, a superiority in directing and performing fire and in making use of fire, will become the main factors upon which the efficiency of a force will depend.

Officers must keep the direction in hand as far as the assaulting distance. Therefore, fire *by command*, or at least fire directed and mastered (volley fire or fire at will of a short duration and in squalls) is the only kind that good infantry will deliver when engaged in a lively action. On the contrary, slow,

continuous fire, undirected fire (wasteful fire), as well as disorderly fire at will, in which the objective has not been sufficiently determined or in which the number of cartridges fired or the effect produced is not checked, must be absolutely prohibited as leading to a useless waste.

FORTIFICATION ON THE FIELD.— The troops of the initial attack have to make use of improvised fortification in order to protect the points conquered against enemy counter-attacks.

Not only will first-line companies try and reinforce with the help of all the means within their reach and to their best ability the extreme " points d'appui " they may occupy at certain moments, but second-line companies and battalions must also consolidate those points in proportion as the progress of the action brings them up.

Finally, partial reserves, with or without the help of engineers, may organize supporting positions in prevision of a failure.

FREEDOM OF MARCH.— While organizing one's intelligence service by cavalry, one has to foresee at the same time the case when the enemy is reconnoitred within less than a day's march from the column. In order to

ensure the freedom of marching then, it is necessary to locate *between the road followed by the column and the enemy* some resisting force capable of holding that enemy during the time the column is marching past.

GAPS.—A gap, a valley is not specially dangerous; there are roads outside the valleys on the highest plateaus; indeed, there are roads wherever commerce or any kind of necessary connection requires them. But a road in a valley or on a plateau is only dangerous to us in so far as it is or can be used by the enemy. If the enemy does not utilize it, it does not exist tactically; that is, everything goes on as if it did not exist at all.

GENIUS AND WORK.—Are we to say that the power of Genius is supreme and mere Work suffers from radical impotence? This might be a well-founded conclusion if Genius were, as Work is, within reach of everybody. But it is not.

We will, on the contrary, lay stress on the efficiency of work, of method, of science, in the absence of Genius, which is as rare as all the great gifts of Nature. We shall see Theory start by getting her lessons from Genius, and then commenting on and discussing those lessons: "Is not what Genius has done the

best of rules to be followed, and can theory do anything better than show why and how this is true?" (Clausewitz). Also we shall find later on "Science giving a great number of its adepts the benefit of its fruits, putting within reach of an average intellect the understanding and the conduct of great military affairs, infusing into the very veins of an army the principles of experience, warranting in other words a community of thought, wherefrom individual initiatives and rational decisions spring up as an *ultima ratio*" (General Bonnal). We shall see the results of work, method, science. We shall see in 1870, the Prussian General Staff, a set of average minds, successfully conducting a great war with three or four armies, though the difficulties which the matchless genius of Napoleon had met in 1812 and 1813 are notorious. In spite of his scale, Napoleon failed in his task. The body had but one head; it lacked muscles, articulations, limbs, without which such a vast whole could not live.

Yet what were the numbers of 1812 and 1813 as compared with those of 1870? What are these latter as compared with those of to-morrow? The technical side of war—railways, balloons, telegraphy, etc.—has increased in a similar way. "To-day, the

Commander-in-Chief cannot sum up everything in his own person. Genius itself will want auxiliaries full of initiative and well taught. How much more will any general who does not belong to the stars of first magnitude need to be helped and completed! Managing an army is too complex for a single man. Certain technical branches require, besides, special knowledge" (von der Goltz).

How, then, in the enforced absence of a sufficient genius, can the means be found rationally to conduct the enterprise, the war, with such masses of men, if not among a corps of officers who shall have been trained by method, work, science, whom the same spirit shall pervade, who shall submit to a common mental discipline, who shall be numerous enough to be able to move and manage the heavy machine of modern armies?

Those are happy, who have been born believers, but they are rare men. One is not born with learning either. Every one of us must make for himself his faith, his convictions, his knowledge of things. Here, again, the result will not be produced by a sudden revelation of light coming in a flash or by an instantaneous development of our faculties. We shall only reach it by a continuous effort of penetration, absorption, assimilation, by a repeated and detailed labour. Do not the

most elementary of arts require the same from us? Who would boast of teaching within a few moments or even within a few lessons fencing, riding, etc.?

HISTORY.—To keep the brain of an army going in time of peace, to direct it continually towards its task of war, there is no book more fruitful to the student than that of history. If war, in its just aspect, is but a struggle between two wills more or less powerful and more or less informed, then the accuracy of decisions arrived at in war will always depend upon the same considerations as those of the past. The same errors reappear, leading to the same checks. The art of war is always to be drawn from the same sources.

INFANTRY IN ACTION.—We find that infantry action, having been more or less transformed under the influence of modern arms, subdivides itself into:

1. A period of marching, as far as to about 800 yards range in order to reach the fire position (that is, the distance which allows of a fire of a sure efficiency, or the nearest position which may be reached under cover), during which the force does little harm to the enemy, but suffers a serious harm unless it evades it by resorting to:

(*a*) Formation; a weak protection in the presence of modern armament. The less vulnerable formations are still much too risky to make marching possible.

(*b*) Firing very little; such fire, in spite of its slight efficacity, to be capable of maintaining a certain confusion among the enemy, of partly paralyzing his means of action.

(*c*) Ground, and such sheltered approaches as the ground may contain. In this last lies the only really efficient means of advancing in spite of the enemy's fire, for the enemy then ceases to see. From that method may be deduced the formation or formations to be adopted. Such a formation must enable the men to utilize well-reconnoitred approaches; *moreover, in view of their having to undertake fire action at an early stage, such a formation must avoid scattering the troops, disorganizing them, or allowing them to use up their cartridges; it must transform them into a well-commanded and well-supplied firing-machine.*

2. A second period, that of fire-action: the object being to secure superiority as soon as it can be effectively secured and kept, that is, from about 800 to 600 yards. Such an achievement requires new faculties on the part of the rank and file and of the Commander.

Rank and File: must be capable of undertaking, keeping up for ten, fifteen, twenty,

thirty minutes and sometimes more an efficient, increasingly violent, constantly controlled and directed fire.

The Commander: must be aware of the results aimed at, of the technical means of attaining them (nature of fire, number of cartridges, etc.), also of the practical means of directing troops in action, of employing them; of enabling such troops to last out and produce an effect, and this in spite of physical fatigue, of nervous excitement, of confusion, etc., all of which are disturbing factors which cannot be suppressed, and must therefore be taken into consideration, as they partly determine the manner of employing troops.

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An action with the arms in use to-day confirms and reinforces the accuracy of Napoleon's saying: "The firearm is everything; the rest is nothing."

As a matter of fact, modern rifles produce important effects up to 1500 yards; guns at a distance three times greater. The "hail of bullets" sometimes becomes no metaphor but a reality. We have nothing but numerous swarms of skirmishers lying on the ground, forming a continuous line, preventing the enemy from advancing, but equally incapable, on the other hand, of putting the enemy to flight by the mere effect of fire.

If, then, the *assault*, attack with the bayonet —in the powerful sense of Souvarov's phrase: "The bullet is crazy, the bayonet alone is intelligent"—always reappears as a supreme and necessary argument in order to complete the adversary's demoralization by threatening to board him as if he were a vessel, also in order to create fear, which puts the enemy to flight, it nevertheless remains undeniable that superiority of fire is an advantage one ought to secure; first, in order to reduce him, to make it easier to assault him; and secondly, in order to reach the level in *moral* which is required for the assault.

INSPIRATION.—Failing definite knowledge founded on security which alone makes it possible to act surely, the only thing one can rely on is a more or less happy *inspiration*.

Von Moltke does not believe in his own inspiration any more than in that of Prince Frederick Charles.[1] It is to give some sort of hint that he imparts to the latter his own view; but he is aware that he cannot *impose* either his view or the prince's. He thus leaves the Commander of the 2nd Army free to act according to *his own inspiration* (which is as well founded as his own), and

[1] During the Prussian advance through Lorraine in August 1870.

to develop any manœuvres he likes, with all the means at his disposal, in spite of the known impossibility of a part of the forces of the 2nd Army acting on the 16th on the left bank of the Moselle. After opening the door to error, he, in effect, gives over the command.

INSTRUCTION.—*Covering the point of debouching* for the arrival, for assembly, and, finally, for the entry into action of the army corps, becomes an important and pressing matter; it is 8.30 a.m., the advance guard will have to perform that heavy covering task unaided for nearly four hours. This function is first ascribed to the 27th Prussian regiment.[1] That regiment had not fired a shot since 1815. It had not taken any part in the affray at Schleswig-Holstein in 1864. A fifty years' peace-training was about to be applied here against the Austrian army which had fought recently (in 1859). We shall soon find, on one side, men who know war without having made it, the Prussians; on the other, men who have not understood war even after waging it.

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No combat could be maintained between one body of troops having neither theory, nor

[1] At Nachod, as above.

training, nor fire discipline, therefore deprived of efficiency in action, and another body of troops perfectly trained, shooting and using fire with discipline, undeniably superior on the battle-field, even though it can display there but part of what it knows and what it is able to do.

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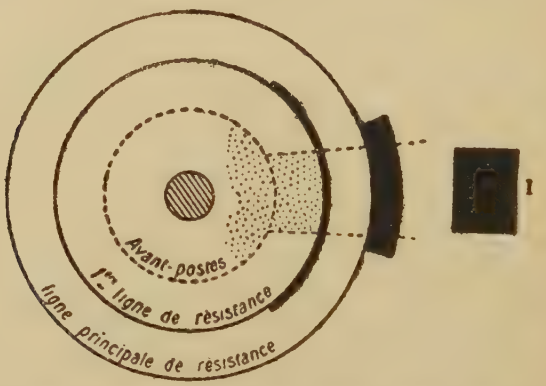
The truth is, no study is possible on the battle-field; one does there simply what one *can* in order to apply what one *knows*. Therefore, in order to *do* even a little, one has already to *know* a great deal and to know it well.

THE INVESTMENT OF A PLACE.—The same principle applies to the investment of towns, which with a due economy of forces may be done by besieging forces no more than equal to the besieged (Metz and Paris in 1870 are examples).

In what does such an investment consist?

In a line of permanently occupied outposts, enabling the investing force to occupy, in case of attack, a previously organized *first line of resistance*. The attack occurring, alarm is given by the outposts; the first line of resistance is then occupied; the reserves prepare. After the attack has dealt (perhaps easily) with the line of outposts, it must, in order to advance, break this first line of

resistance. In this attempt it is compelled to concentrate its efforts and therefore to disclose the direction it is taking. Such reserves and investing troops as are not being attacked and are nearest to that direction, proceed to, and establish themselves on, a previously organized *main line of resistance,* while the resistance of the first line is maintained.



They there offer a further resistance which gives the whole investing army the time to concentrate at I, in the direction adopted by the attacking force, and thus to fight there with *all available forces combined.*

The same principle applies to attack. There, too, the maximum of efficiency is secured by applying the principle of economy of forces and by arranging one's forces according to an organized system.

An attack could not be efficient if it were

made in several directions at the same time. One's forces would be separated into several parts. If the enemy presents himself from two different directions, the offensive is organized in one direction only, the most advantageous one; in the other direction, one does no more than hold the enemy in check. The reserves—that is, the *main body* —are therefore placed (1) so as to support and accomplish the attack which has been devised by the commander and which is the main object of his plan; (2) so as to be able if necessary to reinforce eventually the parrying blow elsewhere, which otherwise might prove inadequate. In proportion as decision comes nearer, all these reserves stream towards the point of attack, where the day will be decided, and thus bring into play all available forces.

INVIOLABILITY OF THE FRONT.—In the future as in the past there will be armies of manœuvre and armies of frontal attack, the first being called on to bring about the decision which the latter prepare. Whether we call these last an advance guard, after the Napoleonic system, or a "centre," after the system of Moltke, it is evident that the tendency is to increase the strength of the first category, which is given the task of the decisive attack

and to reduce the effectives of the second as far as it is possible consistently with keeping their fronts solid and inviolable, for that is indispensable. But this quality can in great measure be furnished by a strong artillery and defensive works. Hence the extension to-day of heavy artillery in the field, of armoured guns and of fortifications upon the field of battle.

MANŒUVRE.— Every manœuvre must be the development of a scheme; it must aim at a goal.

Napoleon regarded manœuvre as no more than a *development of reconnoitring* the enemy. Exploration is successively modified by any strong advance guard because it is capable, *first, of supporting exploring parties* searching for news; *secondly*, the enemy having been found, of itself taking up the intelligence service, and, to this end, of transforming exploration into a *reconnaissance; thirdly*, capable, after finding and reconnoitring the enemy, of *fixing* him for such a length of time as is necessary for the main army to arrive.

The main body of the army follows behind, ready to utilize those results immediately, to set up a system or a combination. How could this army manœuvre otherwise than *surely* and *securely*, being protected by those dis-

positions which constantly aim at scouting, at covering and preparing the manœuvres?

Does not every duel, moreover, every fight against a living and free adversary, develop in the same way?

On guard . . .	Cover yourself.
Engage the sword .	Establish contact.
Stretch out the arm .	Threaten the adversary in the direct line so as to fix him.
Double or disengage or what not.	Manœuvre only when this stage is reached.

MANŒUVRE, A PRIORI.—In a country of easy communications like Hungary (and it is the same case in a great part of Europe), *the enemy remains free to move in every direction so long as we have not seized him.* The a priori manœuvre on Raab [1] may then:

1. Either *strike into the void*, if the enemy does not come on.

2. Or *be parried:* forestalled on that point, he will make for another.

3. Or even *bring about a crisis:* incite the enemy to attack Macdonald and to rout him.

MANŒUVRE, TURNING.— An outflanking ma-

[1] In 1809. Prince Eugene's campaign under Napoleon.

nœuvre is specially convenient when attacking a rear guard, for the latter cannot fulfil its mission once it has been turned.

MASS.— "They (the Austrians) have many good generals, but they try to keep an eye on *too many* things; they try to see, to keep, to defend *everything:* depots, lines of communication, the rear, such and such a strong position, etc. Using such methods, they end by adopting, when on the defensive, the *cordon* system; when on the offensive, they end by attacking in several directions, or rather in conducting several attacks at the same time; in the one case, as in the other, they end in dispersion, which prevents them from commanding, from combining *one single* affair, from striking hard; they end in impotence.

"*I* see only one thing, the *mass;* I try to destroy it, feeling sure that the *accessories* will then tumble down of themselves." [1] *That* is the counter-thesis to the old theory; the destruction of the enemy's *masses* and, therefore, the necessity of organizing the use of our own *masses.*

There is one absolute principle, which must direct all our combinations and dispositions, and this is that, in order to dispose

[1] Napoleon on his Austrian campaigns.

of the adversary's masses, we have to ensure the working of our own. Such must be the directing thought of any chief.

THE MILITARY SPIRIT.—In proportion as numbers increase, and with them time and distance, the road the subordinate must follow becomes longer and more difficult. The supreme command, in the narrow sense of the word, also loses something of its *precision.* It may still determine the result to be obtained, but no longer the ways and means to reach it. How can these numerous scattered troops be sure of arriving in time, unless each of them keeps a clear vision of the single goal to be attained, unless each of them keeps the freedom of acting towards that end? In other words, we must have:

A mental discipline, as a first condition; showing and prescribing to all subordinates the result aimed at by the commanding officer.

Intelligent and active discipline, or rather *initiative,* a second condition, in order to maintain the right and power of acting in the desired direction.

Here comes in the superior notion of a *military spirit* which makes an appeal, first of course to the will, after that to the intelligence. Such a notion clearly involves an act

of deliberate thought, of reflection; it excludes mental immobility, want of thought, intellectual silence—all of which are well enough for the rank and file who have but to perform (although it would certainly be better for them to understand what they have to perform), but which would never do for the subordinate commander; the latter must bring to fruit, with all the means at his disposal, the scheme of the higher command; therefore he must, above all, understand that thought, and afterwards make of his means *the use best suited to circumstances*—of which, however, he is the *only judge*.

MOBILISATION.—The 3rd Army [1] had been ordered to be the first to be ready, therefore it could not receive corps the mobilization of which would be slow or the transport long. Thus we see that the type of battle designed determines the concentration of troops in time as well as in space, and therefore determines the transport and conditions of mobilization to be arranged in time of peace.

This is as much as to say that the military operations begin to-day in time of peace, which shows us once more the importance from the strategical point of view of our peace dispositions, our mobilization, and our

[1] The Third German Army in the campaign of 1870.

transport. We cannot arrange these as things apart; they are not independent of our idea of what the coming battle will be. If we wish that battle to take such and such form we must make sure of its preliminaries beforehand.

OBJECT OF WAR.—The determination of the final goal of a war, the decisive objective, falls evidently to the political side of national life, which alone can tell us why war is made at all and why the nation takes up the sword after laying down the pen. The determination of that final objective is in every case a matter for particular judgment.

It was an error in the determination of this final goal which brought about the check of Napoleon in 1812. He erroneously believed that the conquest of Moscow and of half Russia would assure him the peace which he desired. If we consider our eastern neighbour [1] we find it to-day in the shape of an empire which is a confederation of states some to the south of the river Maine, others to the north; a northern Germany and a southern Germany, with different interests and different temperaments, but having its head in the north, in the old Prussian capital of Berlin. It is there one should go to strike

[1] The German Empire organized by Prussia before the war.

the last blow. But on the line of the Maine, at Mayence, one could, to begin with, cut this power into two halves. A rational plan would therefore consist in marching on Berlin by Mayence. Not because Mayence is a convenient place for crossing the Rhine, not because the left bank here dominates the right bank, or vice versa, but because it is the point where the interests of the north and those of the south meet and therefore also separate.

When Moltke took Paris for his objective he was clearly aiming at the heart of France, of a France which was largely centralized in one point, its capital. Similarly, when he proposed to settle the whole affair north of the Loire he knew very well what conditions led him to that determination. Moltke, basing himself on the usual formula, of course fixed as his first object the mass of the enemy's forces, but even in doing so he looked further, to Paris and to the Loire, and it was this which determined his manner of approach towards the first objective.

His strategy consisted in marching on Paris and on the Loire until he could seize a government which had lost its armed force and had no power remaining to dispute the issue. But he would do so passing by Metz and by Sedan by the north, by all the points where he could

find a French force to defeat. For that was the first condition. Unless he settled that there was nothing done, and it was the position of the enemy forces which determined the order to be followed by the invasion.

To seek out the enemy's armies—the centre of the adversary's power—in order to beat and destroy them; to adopt, with this sole end in view, the direction and tactics which may lead to it in the quickest and safest way: such is the whole mental attitude of modern war.

OPEN ORDER.—It is by the spirit of "a nation in arms" originated by the French Revolution that fighting in open order (*ordre en tirailleurs*) may be understood as a normal form of fighting, and as having to be rationally and quite soundly developed until it becomes that "rush of a team" which turns a modern battle into a struggle between armed crowds.

It is doubtful whether such methods can be applied with success where the private has no direct interest in war and is not the true defender of a national cause.

It is not likely that such methods would succeed where you had an army of mercenaries, or of old soldiers, as in the case of the present [1] English army, which necessarily

[1] 1901.

makes an appeal to steadfastness and discipline in the ranks in order to make up for the moral qualities of man, for individual valour and initiative; the same applies to an army such as the Austrian, composed of various races, of heterogeneous elements, each with distinct aspirations.

PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.—Here is what cannot be foreseen at the outset of operations, and especially cannot be foreseen so far as regards the details of their execution: to steer operations as circumstances demand and according to conditions revealed step by step: to make such strategy go forward from result to result at a slow and certain pace, but always in the direction aimed at and always towards the objective which has been assigned for every effort, after a preliminary examination of the general situation, political as well as military: to keep one's vision clear however winding the road may be which we have to follow if we have to reach our goal.

The plan of campaign when we look at it thus ceases to be a mere plan of operations, and this truth fully justifies the Emperor's epigram that "there was never such a thing as a plan of operations"; a remark which certainly did not mean that he did not know where he was going.

He had his plan of campaign—his final goal. He went forward, settling point by point as circumstances might demand the means of approaching and reaching that goal, and these were :

1. Dispositions thoroughly discussed long before and prepared as to their *execution* in every detail governing the first battle without any necessity for considerable change.

2. *Later*, developing a governing idea which would lead him to the grasping of his final goal. Upset or dominate the Government, occupy territory, and as you go direct operations as events determine, but retain for your master object the defeat of the forces opposed to you. Such is the programme for war, fully dependent upon a true plan of campaign.

POSITIONS, DEFENSIVE.— Owing to their volume of fire, modern arms make manœuvring under fire impossible; owing to their range, they make it necessary to take up fighting dispositions at a great distance, to deploy very far away; owing to the rapidity of their fire, such necessities may be enforced by even relatively small numbers.

Any occupied position unavoidably delays the adversary, provided the position be a good one. What is a *good* position in the modern sense of that word? A ground

favourable to the defensive, which in its turn is composed of *fire* and *steadiness;* it is a site provided to this end with :

Points from which one may observe and fire at a long distance;

Obstacles, that is, "points d'appui": strong points.

If that twofold condition is fulfilled, the enemy is compelled to manœuvre from a distance until the last moment (assault of the obstacles), to bring into action all his means, artillery, infantry; that is, to advance painfully, to lose time while he should be going forward as rapidly as possible.

PREPARATION IN WAR. — Preparation in modern war is more necessary and must be pushed further than in the past.

The necessity of pushing preparation as far as possible is to be found in the conduct of any tactical operation.

THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL TERRITORY. — Here [1] we clearly see the part which modern war assigns to the idea of defence or protection of territory. It is summed up in the union of all means at our disposal in the direction which is most favourable for *attack,*

[1] In the plan of Moltke for the war against France in 1870.

and this done, one covers directly or indirectly the important points of a country. For one's adversary cannot menace those points without first facing the encounter of our forces. And that condition governs everything.

Direct and immediate protection of the national soil is often inefficient, and as things develop becomes useless. History has taught us that lesson ever since Valmy. Brunswick was master of the road to Paris, yet he could do nothing against the capital, although the road to it was open. Later, when he had failed in his effort of the 20th of September,[1] he had to retire rapidly to save himself from destruction. You get nothing save through a victory. Secondary interests should therefore be eliminated unless they obscure our view of the principal objective and of the sole means of attaining it: which is by a mass of troops of the utmost strength at our disposal. Let us not divide, as would men of short views in war, the defence of the country into that of Paris, of the coast, of the Cotentin, of Provence, or of other frontiers that may be menaced. The security of all these points depends upon the union of our forces in a

[1] The so-called Cannonade of Valmy, when the Prussians failed to take the heights on which the French Army stood.

central point whence they may act offensively against the army of invasion.

SUPPLY.—The millions of men who will be gathered to-day in the neighbourhood of the enemy who must be ready to fight him at short notice can no longer put into practice the old formula, "Disperse for food; concentrate for fighting." That formula would give their effectives neither of the results sought. The army must at once march and feed itself in dense formation, and therefore draw its sustenance from its immediate rear. The old system of provisionment going forward with the army, which was upset by the system of local requisitions under the Revolution, has now again become necessary. It has come to birth again from the very development of national armies. Railways being necessary for the feeding of a modern army, at least at the beginning of a war, that army cannot go far from the tracks. Again, in case of check, it has to retire towards the interior zones which can feed it, that is, towards the regions where production of goods and food is taking place. The national territory becomes the base of operations for the forces in the field, and the railways become their necessary lines of communication. It is thus that national war as it develops

has lessened the rôle of the capital as the goal of operations, and has brought out the new necessities of national objectives.

RANK AND FILE.— When under fire, the man in the rank and file obeys the voice of the officers he knows : company-commanders, section-commanders. The line soon turns into separate small batches of individuals who cannot be carried forward unless they are led individually and are known by name to their commanders.

RECONNAISSANCE.—Such [1] is a reconnaissance directed by Bonaparte and by Massena under very difficult circumstances.

1. Even to these ardent men, the conduct of troops did not consist in rushing head-down on the enemy. You must act with *full knowledge of the case*, and proportion your aims and actions to your available means. You must begin by *reconnoitring*.

2. In order to reconnoitre, one must compel the enemy to *show himself* wherever he may be. To this end, he has to be *attacked* until his position and his front has been clearly defined. Hence several attacking columns are necessary. The attack, however, is not

[1] The reconnaissance towards Dego on the 13th of April, 1796, in the campaign of Italy.

made with the intention of bringing on the action; therefore each column will only supply, ahead of itself, some patrols, some skirmishers who will advance, fall back, easily disengage themselves at a given moment. The best means are: *action from a distance, firing at the longest range possible,* always so acting as to exercise pressure on the enemy without allowing oneself to be *tied up*.

In the rear of the combatant troops a number of main bodies were held ready to act as *supporting troops* (being established on supporting points and on points where there was observation for fire). The points of communication and assembly in the rear were also held (Bormida crossing, village of Rochetta).

RESERVE, STRATEGICAL. — The unforeseen appears as much in strategy as in tactics. The larger the dispositions we have to take the less the risk of surprise. Great strategical operations are accomplished as a rule so slowly and over spaces so vast, their results are generally so little subject to variation, one has the time to see them coming and to take up one's dispositions. Hence the consequence that a strategical reserve has no reason for existence, in so far as it is prepared for meeting the unforeseen, save when one has lost

the power to act and is reduced to merely awaiting the action of the enemy.

When our business is that of a strategical defensive the reserve appears again as the sole means at our disposal for parrying the principal effort of the enemy when it shall at last have been discovered. As spaces and effectives increase in scale manœuvre will take place upon greater and greater distances. The three German armies in line upon the 5th and 6th of August, 1870, presented, as we all know, a front of about a hundred kilometres. It is no exaggeration to expect a similar extension in the future. In such conditions a reserve may easily have fifty or sixty kilometres to go, or even more, in order to reach the field of action and to come up against the objective assigned to it. Such a manœuvre, if it is to have its effect in time, will need more rapid methods of progress than have hitherto been suggested or it will fail. Specially organized use of the railways would seem the sole procedure permitting a reserve to come into useful action under most circumstances.[1]

RESERVES. — The scene took place at Abukeer, during the battle. Bonaparte was

[1] Written before the development of the internal combustion engine.

dictating an order to his Chief of Staff, Berthier (a man who kept everything in mind, and particularly the filling up of blank order forms). Bonaparte stopped, and Berthier asked him what troops he desired to form the reserve.

"*Do you take me for Moreau?*" answered Bonaparte. There was obviously no such a thing in his mind as a *necessary* reserve. Troops must be reserved, but only in order to manœuvre and to attack with more energy than the others. Such was the use of forces he had been led to by the idea of an attack which must, in the last result, exclude *any* reserve, *any* caution.

RETREAT.—The losses suffered by the Prussians, at the moment when they undertook the retreat from Gilly,[1] show well what difficulty troops experience in extricating themselves from an attack if they wait too long before beginning their movement. This necessity would nowadays be felt earlier, because modern arms extend their powerful effects to a far longer range.

ROADS.—It is readily written that one should always keep one road for each army corps. To act otherwise, they say, is to risk famine for the troops from the difficulty of

[1] In the campaign of Waterloo.

bringing up convoys in time. In practice the rule often cannot be applied. Further, even when the rule is applied (when the thing is possible), to restrict one road to the march of each army corps leads one, if one is not very careful, to a premature deployment of one's forces, and to an order in line without depth—incapable of manœuvre. And these are very grave inconveniences which ought generally to make us abandon the system.

SECURITY.— The best commanded armies have marched, have manœuvred, amidst the unknown. It was unavoidable. They have, however, got the better of that dangerous situation, they have come out of it victoriously by resorting to security, which enabled them to live without suffering damage in an atmosphere full of dangers.

A constant preoccupation, while we prepare and combine an action against the enemy, must be to escape his will, to parry any undertaking by which he might prevent our action from succeeding. Any military idea, any scheme, any plan, must therefore be connected with the conception of *security*. We must, as if we were fencing, attack without uncovering ourselves, parry without ceasing to threaten the adversary.

Security is based on two elements, two

mathematical quantities: *time* and *space;* also it contains a third element: the *resisting power* of the troops.

This notion of Security, which we express by means of a single word, divides itself into:

1. *Material security,* which makes it possible to avoid enemy blows when one does not desire to strike back or cannot do so; this is the means of *feeling secure* in the midst of danger, of halting and marching under shelter.

2. *Tactical security,* which makes it possible to go on carrying out a programme, an order received, in spite of chance unfavourable circumstances produced by war; in spite of the unknown, of measures taken by the enemy of his own free will; also to act *securely and with certainty, whatever the enemy may do,* by safeguarding *one's own freedom of action.*

The German army of 1870 still kept to mere *tactical* security. Yet we find the notion of *strategical* security in its fullest sense in all Napoleon's wars, as well as among the German staffs of 1814 and 1815. The theory is likely to rise again to-day, for it has been fully alive in the past.

STRATEGY.—*No strategy can henceforth prevail over that which aims at ensuring tactical results, victory by fighting.*

A strategy paving the way to tactical decisions alone: this is the end we come to in following a study which has produced so many learned theories. Here, as everywhere else, as in politics, the entrance upon the stage of human masses and passions necessarily leads to simplification.

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Strategy is but a question of *will* and *common sense;* in order to keep that double faculty in the field, you must have fostered it by training, you must possess a *complete military culture* (*humanités militaires*), you must have *examined and solved a number of concrete problems in your art.*

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It is by movement that troops assemble and prepare for battle. Movement governs strategy.

You must seek the shock; hence a new set of reasons for movement: movement in order to *seek* battle; movement in order to *assemble* one's forces on the ground; movement in order to *carry out* the attack.

Such is the first law that governs the theory, a law from which no troop can ever escape and which has been expressed by the military formula: of all faults, one only is degrading, namely *inaction.*

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The 5th Prussian Corps would not have managed to debouch from Nachod if it had been definitely thrown back. If one observes that, on the same day, the 1st Corps suffered a severe check at Trautenau, the entrance into Bohemia would have been rendered impossible to the 2nd Army. What would then have become of General von Moltke's plan? Let us acknowledge once more that strategy, however brilliant it may be, is at the mercy of tactics.

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Let us no longer suffer strategy to be tied fast to geography, to mere ground, to seeking positions, and the "keys" of a country; but rather let strategy take account in a national war of the main national interests and the main organs by which a nation lives.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS.— Strategy in the first place demands the seeking for our particular battle and the preparation for it, and these in the very best conditions. Our battle once won, it enters a new phase of the same type of object in view, the next battle.

Tactics is concerned with the reasonable conduct of the battle once engaged. A good tactic obeys at once certain spiritual laws and certain mechanical principles, aiming

through both to such an overthrow of the adversary as shall be beyond question.

Though history shows us these two fractions of the art of war reaching various mutual proportions in the hands of a Napoleon or a Moltke or their adversaries, these two fractions none the less remain dominated in their combination, and characterized to-day by the developments each military action has gone through, and especially by these three, a tendency to maximum national recruitment, the increase of available effectives, and the perfection of armament.

STUDY.— Men called to the conduct of troops should prepare themselves to deal with cases more and more varied upon an ever-increasing horizon of experience. They can only be given the capacity to arrive at a prompt and judicious position by developing in them through study their power of analysis and of synthesis; that is, of conclusion in a purely objective sense, conclusion upon problems which have been actually lived and taken from real history. Thus also can they be founded through the conviction that comes from knowledge in a confidence sufficient to enable them to take such decisions upon the field of action.

SURPRISE.— Surprise consists in the hard

fact that the enemy suddenly appears in considerable numbers, without his *presence* having been known to be so *near*, for want of *information*, and without it being possible to *assemble*, for want of *protection ;* for want, in one word, of a security-service.

Where there is no *strategical security*, there is *strategical surprise ;* that is, a possibility for the enemy to attack us while we are not in a position to receive him under good conditions ; a possibility for him to prevent our insufficiently protected assembly from taking place. Further, our forces as they go into action, go astray, imperil themselves by taking wrong directions, owing to lack of reconnoitring, of information, and owing to imperfectly understanding the notion of *security ;* an idea which implies the art of acting not only *securely* but also *surely*, that is, with *full knowledge of the case.*

The notion of strategical security was completely ignored by the German armies of 1870, and the result of that fault in conducting the war was that they often found themselves in a particularly critical situation. Nothing but the immobility, the complete passiveness of the French made it possible for them to come out of such situations without a disaster.

Strategical security was, however, known

and put in practice by the Germans of 1813 and 1814. Taught by the severe lessons received from the Emperor, they had grasped its importance.

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Material surprise means losing material security; we have, in case of such surprise, the enemy freely firing into our billets, our bivouacs, or our marching columns.

Tactical surprise means endangering tactical security, losing freedom of action. This would have been the case with the 5th Corps in 1870, more especially with the Lespart Division, had the enemy come on during the days of the 5th or 6th of August. The marching forces would have had to risk a battle on the very road they were following. Instead of continuing their movement, they would have had to fight; they would never have arrived.

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The means of breaking the enemy's spirit, of proving to him that his cause is lost, is surprise in the widest sense of that word.

Surprise bringing into the struggle something "unexpected and terrible" (Xenophon); "everything unexpected is of great effect" (Frederick). Surprise depriving the enemy of the possibility of reflection and therefore of discussion.

Here we have a novel instrument, and one

capable of destructive power beyond all knowledge. However, one cannot obtain this at will; setting an ambush, attacking in reverse, are possible in a small war, but impracticable in a great one; it is necessary, therefore, in great wars to produce a danger which the enemy shall not have the time to parry or which he shall not be able to parry sufficiently; a destructive force which should be known, or seem, to the enemy to be superior to his own; to this end, forces and thereby undisputable efforts must be concentrated on a point where the enemy is not able to *parry* instantly, that is, to answer by deploying an equal number of forces at the same time.

To surprise amounts to crushing an opponent *from a short distance* by *numbers* in *a limit of time;* otherwise, the adversary though overtaken by numbers retains the power to meet the attack, to bring up his reserves, in which case the assailant loses the advantage of surprise.

He also loses that advantage if surprise starts from a *great distance,* for the enemy may then, owing to the range and delaying power of modern arms, regain the time to bring up his reserves.

Such are the conditions of *numbers, time, space,* military action must fulfil in order to

contain these elements of *surprise* which are necessary to the destruction of the enemy's spirit.

Hence the *superiority of manœuvring armies*, which alone are capable of quickness and nimbleness in preparing *an attack ;* launching it *at short distance*, and carrying it out *quickly*.

One similarly perceives the common intentional features possessed by the attacks in flank of former generations ; the oblique order of Frederick ; the " event " of the Napoleonic battle, and the decisive (generally enveloping) attacks of modern battle.

Under these various shapes there appears a development of this common idea of a *surprise ;* the idea of trying to produce among the enemy the same moral effect—terror ; of creating in the enemy's mind, by suddenly using unexpected and undeniably powerful means, a feeling of impotence, the conviction that he cannot conquer, that he is vanquished.

To break the enemy's will : such is the first principle we derive from our study ; to break it by means of an unexpected and supremely violent stroke—such is the first consequence of that principle.

TACTICS.— Individual valour in the rank and file is insufficient to create victory.

From being decisive in the elementary origins of combat, it gradually loses its influence, its weight, in proportion as the numbers employed increase. Had Napoleon developed his thought, he would have told us that at the battle of the Pyramids, a handful of Frenchmen, commanded by him, had conquered about 30,000 of these Orientals, though the latter were quite as valiant as, and even individually superior to, the French.

What is it, then, that determines the result? What is it that provides victory?

Tactics, Order, Manœuvre.

There are such things as advantageous tactics and rational fighting dispositions, that is, a combination of forces set up by the Commander. The influence of that Commander, of that directing mind, soon becomes considerable and decisive; it gets the better of the sum of individual valour whenever the numbers of the fighters is large, as, for instance, at the Pyramids. Let us learn a lesson from this. In the presence of such a situation, let us admit self-examination and confirm our conclusions.

We, the French, possess a fighter, a soldier, undeniably superior to the one beyond the Vosges in his racial qualities, activity, intelligence, spirit, power of exaltation, devotion,

patriotism : he is the mameluke as opposed to the French cavalrymen.

If we are beaten, it will be due to the weakness of our tactics. Let us then find, and provide our soldiers with, those tactics which get the better of *numbers* and *valour* as at the Pyramids; which will doubly enable us to get the better of an army the individual valour of which is inferior to our own.

TACTICS, GERMAN. — The same care [1] for effectively directing fire in action is found nowadays to prevail in certain German manœuvres. The procedure of a body of infantry may be quoted as an instance among others.

We find here first a very thin and discontinuous line. Behind, at a distance of about 300 yards, a few supports corresponding to the intervals within the line. Three or four companies in all are deployed on the whole front. The remainder of the division follows behind in irregular and almost indis-

[1] "Another phenomenon of some importance has again been observed since the war of 1870. What I mean is that new principle obtaining among the infantry, a principle according to which infantry is careful *to submit its fire to a more exacting discipline* than in the past, also to accept a scientific direction *in spite of the dispersed order* which itself characterizes its modern mode of action."—Von der Goltz.

tinguishable lines. The echelons (usually companies in line on two ranks) follow each other at a distance of about 500 yards, separated, moreover, by changing intervals.

At about 800 yards from the enemy, the line opens fire and is immediately reinforced by its supports, the intervention of which produces one, two, or three bounds forward.

At 600 yards, the line is formed by men in close alignment as a result of the entry into line of other companies; a long interval of time then passes for preparing the attack. The fire develops and reaches an extreme violence; the dispositions of march are condensed into dispositions of attack.

The attack is launched, etc.

TEACHING, PRACTICAL METHOD OF.—"Between those two terms, *scientific conception* and the *art of commanding*, there is a gulf which the method of teaching must bridge if it is to deserve the name of a *practical method*.

"*Application* must therefore be resorted to."

Here appears, at the same time as the method, the object which is being aimed at: it consists in passing from the scientific conception to the art of commanding, from truth mastered and known to the practical

application of that truth. The gulf was bridged by the Prussian School. In proof, consider the Commanders of the vanguards in 1866. Although they had only recently left their school, they started the business of that campaign with a pluck, a skill, and thereby an efficiency which had hitherto been thought to belong exclusively to men who had already fought both often and well.

Let us do the same; let us cross the gulf by the same roads, the same bridges.

In order to do this, we must have a *practical* teaching including application made to *particular cases* of fixed principles, drawn from history, in order (1) to prepare for *experience*, (2) to teach the *art of commanding*, (3) lastly, to impart the *habit of acting correctly without having to reason.*

TENACITY.—Forces were lacking to carry the offensive further and to overthrow the enemy.[1] Nevertheless, fatigue and slackness had become general after so long and so violent a struggle. The bodily forces of the opponents were exhausted. One last attack, even were it executed by small forces, might in such circumstances produce a considerable

[1] This deals with the evening of the Battle of Razonville, 16th August, 1870, and the enemy in question were the French opposed to the Germans.

result. It was necessary, therefore, that the will of the General in command should not be overborne by the exhaustion of his troops. On the contrary, his will had to find some way of using the last gasp of energy in his men and his horses; he had to ask of them one last and supreme effort to march against the enemy.

But the adversary might act in the same fashion. His resources also permitted him to obtain in such a moment not only normal results but effective success.

The enemy's constant returns to the offensive proved that he still had fresh troops. His activity might spread; and that was a danger to be avoided at all costs.

The necessity therefore imposed itself of forestalling him, of attacking before he did. An order was immediately sent to the reduced battalions of the 6th Division, which were assembled before Vionville, to attack by way of the sunken road of Razenville against the French batteries of the Roman road. The centre of the German line to the west and south of Vionville consisted of a great battery which had suffered heavily in the struggles of the day. Many horses were lacking. The munitions were nearly exhausted. By changing position it would lose the immediate advantage of a calculated range. These con-

siderations were, under the conditions, of no value. The artillery received the order to go forward, in order to produce not material effects—it lacked every means of achieving them—but a result purely moral. It had to affirm the determination to win, the power to go forward, and hence to establish the victory which was still sought and desired.

THE UNKNOWN. — The *unknown* is the governing condition of war.

Everybody is familiar with this principle (so you might think), and being familiar with it will distrust the unknown and master it; the unknown will no longer exist.

This is not true in the least. All armies have lived and marched amidst the unknown.

VICTORY.—No victory without battle.

* * * * *

Far from being a sum of distinct and partial results, victory is the consequence of efforts, some of which are victorious while others appear to be fruitless, which nevertheless all aim at a common goal, all drive at a common result: namely, at a decision, a conclusion which alone can provide victory.

* * * * *

Victory always falls to those who deserve it by their greater strength of intelligence and of will.

The will to conquer: such is victory's first condition, and therefore every soldier's first duty; but it also amounts to a supreme resolve which the commander must, if need be, impart to the soldier's soul.

If the will to conquer is necessary to offering battle with any chance of success, it is criminal in the Commander-in-Chief to deliver or accept battle without possessing that superior will which must provide direction and impulsion for all.

And if battle is thrust upon him by circumstances, he must decide to give battle, to fight, in order to conquer in spite of it all.

On the other hand, one must not fight for the sake of fighting. "Battles concerning which one cannot say *why* and to what purpose they have been delivered are commonly the resource of ignorant men" (Maréchal de Saxe).

However obvious these points may be, they seem to have been overlooked during the tragic periods of our history.

E. g.: the great battles round Metz (16th, 18th, and 31st August, 1870), in which we see an army fighting bravely without its chief desiring to secure victory. How could victory be thus secured?

As a matter of fact, the great events of history, the disasters it relates from time to time, such as the collapse of French power in

1870, are never accidental, but result from dominating and general causes; from forgetting the most elementary moral and intellectual truths, as well as from relaxing that activity of mind and body which is the very life and sanity of armies.

WAR, FORM OF.—A war not only arises, but *derives its nature*, from the political ideas, the moral sentiments, and the international relations obtaining at the moment when it breaks out.

This amounts to saying: try and know *why* and *with the help of what* you are going to act; then you will find out *how* to act.

WAR (FUTURE).—The next[1] war, using balloons, telegraphs, railways, and quick-firing artillery and heavy artillery well hidden upon a large scale, will treat the problems which were set for solution in the past according to the same principles but in a new fashion. In this order of ideas we shall see the next war presenting an organization of the German armies and of their special engines of war, corresponding to an object which will be assigned to each army and which will depend upon a common manœuvre governing the whole force. The next war will further show that such a manœuvre, prepared beforehand

[1] Written in 1901.

with a novel increase of forces, with a novel variation of armament, and these set to their task in adequate fashion, will present elements of success which we should never see in a manœuvre improvised at the last moment without special means already on the spot to reinforce the characteristics of the action.

On our side, in order to check this German manœuvre we ought also to make use of all our troops no matter of what sort, repartition them between the various armies, and give them every kind of new armament attached to the special rôle which will be assigned to each army in an offensive manœuvre, which will be prepared in detail, or at any rate at the very outset, in some defensive organization. It will be in vain to cite the fact that the data of the problem are not yet determined or to quote that as an argument for putting off the manœuvre and the organization of siege warfare which it will involve. It is only twenty-seven kilometres from Nancy to Château-Salins, fifty from the Metz-Sarrebourg railway to the Moselle. Therefore the field of hypothesis and of all possible combination is very limited, as are also the material difficulties to be overcome and the space to be traversed.[1]

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[1] This was written under the conception that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected.—Translator.

Without mentioning the armies on the wings which will come up against forts and small fortified places, and will therefore receive and use howitzer batteries, it is to be presumed that we shall also find in the armies of the centre charged with frontal attack the same type of armament in great proportion. Troops flanked on either side cannot manœuvre; they are compelled, if they are to advance, to overset and destroy the obstacles which stop them. The method to use is clearly that of heavy artillery. When they reach the limit of their offensive power there still remains the task of holding out, and to achieve this task recourse will be had to the method of siege warfare. The number and calibre of guns will be increased and protection will be sought for high trajectory pieces in the nature of the ground, and for flat trajectory in armoured plates and turrets.

WAR, METHOD OF.—The old systems of war, above all concerned with the conservation of an army's strength, looked to achieve their end by trick, by threat, by negotiation, by manœuvre, by local combat, by the occupation of enemy territory, by the capture of towns. Modern war, since Napoleon, uses reckless of cost all the means at its disposal. It has but one method, the act of force. It

does not discuss with the enemy until it has crushed him in battle and completed his ruin by pursuit.

WAR, OBJECTIVITY OF.—The military art is not an accomplishment, an art for dilettante, a sport. You do not make war without reason, without an object, as you would give yourself up to music, painting, hunting, lawn tennis, where there is no great harm done whether you stop altogether or go on, whether you do little or much. Everything in war is linked together, is mutually interdependent, mutually interpenetrating. When you are at war you have no power to act at random. Each operation has a *raison d'être*, that is an *object;* that object, once determined, fixes the nature and the value of the means to be resorted to as well as the use which ought to be made of the forces. That object is, in each case, the very answer to the famous question Verdy du Vernois asked himself when he reached the battle-field of Nachod.

In presence of the difficulties which faced him, he looked into his own memory for an instance or a doctrine that would supply him with a line of conduct. Nothing inspired him. "Let history and principles," he said, "go to the devil! after all, *what is the problem?*" And his mind instantaneously

recovered its balance. This is the objective way of treating the subject. Every military operation must be approached from the side of its object, in the widest sense of that word, What is the Problem?

WAR, PRINCIPLES OF.—There is such a thing as a theory of war. That theory starts from a number of principles:

The principle of economy of forces.

The principle of freedom of action.

The principle of free disposal of forces.

The principle of security, etc. . . .

This teaching of principles does not, however, aim at a platonic result such as mere learning or as merely filling your mind with a number of new and certain truths. "War is above all a simple art, an art wholly of execution" (Napoleon).

Failing the conscientious following of the lessons of history, peace-time instruction is bringing us slowly, but surely, back to the false method of "fencing," by virtue of the omnipotence falsely ascribed to material power.

The French of 1870, just like the Prussians of 1806, are a proof of this truth. In both cases, as von der Goltz puts it, "when the enemy became threatening, strategists gave themselves up to the *study of the ground*,

established *imaginary plans of campaign* and looked for *positions* which they might or might not discover."

Is this not the very summary of our last war and its pitiful history?

1. Positions: there is Cadenbronn, there is Froeschwiller, there is the forest of Haye, all of which are supposed in turn to ensure the country's salvation.

2. Imaginary plans. We decide that the Rhine must be passed: where, when, how, with what means? It does not matter. The junction with the Austrians will be made in Bohemia. The generals think they can *pigeon-hole military plans*. They believe any combination to be valid by itself, independently from circumstances of time, place, goal to be reached. It reminds one of a lawyer preparing what is called an "omnibus" speech, a speech suitable to any possible case.

3. The notion of battle has totally disappeared—and it has disappeared because people believe they can do without it, because they believe they can, like the immortal Berwick, earn victory without fighting—that when troops are being led into the fight, it is from a skilful handling of these troops, mutually related to each other, from a perfect way of falling in, from some new formation or general

disposition, that success will come. A battle is prepared for as if it were a *parade;* no mention is made either of the enemy, or of blows to be delivered (see the orders for the battle of Champigny), or of the hammer that must strike the blow. No mention is made of the use of Force.

These erroneous considerations will frequently reappear, without your knowing it, in your own decisions; they will call forth my criticism whenever you undertake *outflanking* operations or operations on the *rear* of the enemy which will draw all their assumed value from the mere *direction* in which they will be made; whenever you undertake to *threaten without attacking;* whenever you resort to mere *plans, geometrical drawings,* as if certain dispositions, certain figures possessed a virtue in themselves.

All this is as flimsy as a paper wall.

You cannot push a staunch adversary back by means of a skilfully selected direction. You cannot even stop him without really attacking, any more than a paper wall can prevent rain and frost from entering a house.

Being positive in its nature, war, which we are about to study, only admits of positive solutions. There is no effect without a cause; if you want to produce an effect, you

must develop the cause; and in war you must apply *force.*

If you want to push the enemy back, *beat him;* otherwise, nothing is done; and there is only one means of doing this: namely *fighting. No victory without fighting.*

WAR, SCIENCE OF. — Nobody will venture to-day to assert that there could be a *science of war.* It would be as absurd as a science of poetry, of painting, or of music. But it does not in the least follow that there should not be a *theory* of war, just as there is one for each of these liberal and peaceful arts. It is not theory which makes a Raphael, a Beethoven, or a Goethe, but the theory of their art placed at their disposal a technique without which they could not have risen to the summits they reached.

WAR, TRANSFORMATION OF.—War, like all other human activities, undergoes changes; it does not escape the law of evolution. We live in the century of railways, coaches were none the less useful in their day. But we must not use coaches to-day when we want to travel fast and well.

To deny the change wrought in warfare amounts to denying the effects of the French Revolution, which was not only philosophical, social, and political, but also military. Not

only did it dare to declare war on kings and tyrants, but also victoriously to oppose the inexperienced but at the same time violently impassioned bands of the *levée en masse* to the minutely and rigidly trained troops of the older Europe.

To us, at this moment of history, in the midst of modern Europe, that old fencing and those antiquated methods are illustrated by a certain kind of warfare in which there is no decisive solution, nothing but a limited end—a warfare consisting in manœuvres without fighting, submitted on the other hand to absolute rules, of which I will here give a few typical instances :

Joly de Maizeroy gave the following definition of war : " The science of war consists not only in knowing how to fight but *even more in avoiding* combat, in selecting posts, in directing the marches so as to reach the *goal* without committing oneself . . . so again as to decide to fight a battle only when it is deemed indispensable." To defer, to put off, such is the formula.

We again come across this " *war without battle* " in the pages of Massenbach, who considered it the supreme form of the military art.

Again, the same kind of warfare was characterized in the following way by Marshal de

Saxe, a man of undeniable ability: "I am not in favour of giving battle; especially at the outset of a war. I am even convinced that a clever general can wage war *his whole life* without being compelled to do so."

Entering Saxony in 1806, Napoleon writes to Marshal Soult: "There is nothing I desire so much as a great battle." The one wants to avoid battle his whole life; the other demands it at the first opportunity. Further, these theories have the vice of building up magnificent systems on the mere properties and intrinsic value of ground.

Again, we see Schwartzemberg, in 1814, proceed by Bâle, run up against the obstacles of Switzerland, completely isolate his own army and expose it a hundred times to the striking blows of an even disarmed Napoleon, face all these risks, in order to secure the advantage of entering France through the Langres plateau; because the Langres plateau gives birth to the Marne, the Aube, the Seine, etc. . . . and constitutes (geographically) the *strategical key* to France. Blücher's judgment about this view is well known.

To be brief, the idea of a result to be obtained by conquering had totally disappeared from all these conceptions. The notion of *force* had been replaced by the notion of *figure;* the *mechanics* of war had become the

geometry of war; *intention* stood instead of *fact; threat* instead of *stroke,* of battle.

* * * * *

Such a formalism also leads to *pedantry.* The Austrian Generals, after they had been beaten by Bonaparte, were heard to exclaim: "It is not possible to disregard, as much as does this man, Bonaparte, the most essential principles of the art of war!"

Truly enough, a new era had begun, the era of national wars, of wars which were to work at a fearful potential; for those wars were destined to throw into the fight all the resources of the nation; they were to set themselves as their goal, not a dynastic interest, not the conquest or possession of a province, but the defence or the propagation of philosophical ideas in the first place, next of principles of independence, of unity, of immaterial advantages of various kinds. Lastly they staked upon the issue the interests and fortune of every individual private. Hence the rising of passions,[1] that is, elements of force, hitherto in the main unused.

Do you now catch the antithesis of these two epochs—that before and that after the Revolution?

[1] Already, in the past, the most violent contests had been caused by the religious wars, which were wars for an idea.

On one side, an extreme utilization of human, ardently impassioned, masses; an absorption of all the activities of society; an entire subordination to the needs of the hour of the material parts of the system, such as fortification, supply, use of ground, armament, billeting, etc.

On the other side (eighteenth century), a regular and methodical utilization of those material parts which become the bases for various systems; for systems which would of course change with the moment, but would none the less always tend to make such a use of the troops as to spare the army, the capital of the sovereign: an army not really caring for the cause for which it is fighting, though not lacking in the professional virtues, in particular the virtues of military spirit and honour.

The fancy for the "old fencing," for "antiquated methods," for "ancient processes," periodically reappears in peace-time among those armies which do not study history and therefore forget the very thing which above all gives life to war: namely *action*, with all its consequences.

The undeniable reason for this is that all these systems are wholly based on things you can touch in peace-time, on the *material* factor which keeps all its importance in mere

drill and manœuvres, while in peace-time the *moral* factor cannot be either clearly grasped or made use of.

For instance, the battle of the Alma or any similar one, if it were reproduced in the course of manœuvres, would turn out a Russian victory and a French defeat; the ground demands such a result. You would conclude: escarpments of such a nature as those of the Alma being insurmountable, it is useless to guard them.

Such and such a percentage is attained by rifle-fire against a target; such and such are the effects of artillery. Therefore attack must be utterly incapable of success. The conclusion drawn from this would be that you must yourself avoid attack, and wait for that of your adversary: go back to the war of positions and skilful manœuvring; starve your enemy of supplies by outflanking him, etc. At each improvement in armament you would have to return to the defensive.

Now the same problems, if studied in the book of history, suggest an exactly contrary answer.

The battle of the Alma was undeniably a French victory. It follows therefrom that any ground may be successfully stormed by the enemy if it is not defended by rifle-fire, that is by watchful and active men.

Any improvement of firearms is ultimately bound to add strength to the offensive, to a cleverly conducted attack. History shows it, reason explains it.

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War became national in the first instance as a means of conquering and guaranteeing the independence of each existing nation. (French of 1792–3, Spaniards of 1804–14, Russians of 1812, Germans of 1813, Europe of 1814.) It was marked at this stage by those glorious and powerful manifestations of national passions which are named Valmy, Saragossa, Tarancon, Moscow, Leipsig, etc.

Later on, war, though still national, was made with the object of acquiring by force *unity* of races, *nationality*. This was the thesis of the Italians and Prussians in 1866, 1870. This will be the thesis in the name of which the King of Prussia, made Emperor of Germany, will claim the German provinces of Austria.

But we find to-day a third kind of national war arising, bent on conquering economic advantages and advantageous treaties of commerce for each nation.

After having been the violent means by which peoples enforced their own admittance into the world of nations, war is now becoming the means they use to enrich themselves.

National egotism, breeding self-interest in

politics and war, and making war a means of satisfying the growing cravings of the nations, these nations therefore bringing into the fight a growing concentration of passion; a more and more excessive *feeding* of war, including the use of the human factor and of all the resources of the country—such is the picture of modern warfare. It was truly said, then, that "Nations are like men who prefer losing their life to losing their honour, and who prefer staking their last resources to confessing themselves vanquished. Defeat is the ruin of *all*" (von der Goltz). Such are the origins of modern war. Here is its moral: you must henceforth go to the very limits to find the aim of war. Since the vanquished party now never yields before it has been deprived of all means of reply, what you have to aim at is the destruction of those very means of reply.

What, then, are the means of furthering this more and more *national*, more and more *interested*, more and more *egotistic* policy; of furthering a more and more *impassioned*, *violent* war?

"Mobilization nowadays takes up all the intellectual and material resources of the country in order to ensure a successful issue" (von der Goltz).

All resources: a noteworthy difference with previous systems of recruiting (such as enlistment, drawing of lots, substitution, etc.), which, even under the Revolution and the Empire, left unused a great number of citizens.

All *intelligent* resources: while previous systems allowed the wealthy and educated part of the nation to escape.

Moreover, mobilization takes men already *trained* to military service; they have all previously gone through a course of military training, while the mass-levies of 1793 or the German landwehrs of 1813 embodied inexperienced men only.

Therefore, while being more considerable in numbers and better trained, the modern mass is also more sensitive.

The human factor already possessed an undeniable predominance over the material factor at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Is it not clear that this predominance is still growing in every way?

But, again, the army we propose to set up is not a professional army. It is an army of civilians belonging to all callings, to all ranks of society, and wrung from their own people: which callings, society, people, cannot indefinitely do without them. War brings discomfort, puts everywhere a stop to life.

Hence the consequence that such war cannot last long, that it must be conducted with violence and reach its goal quickly; otherwise it will remain without result.

It may be stated, then, that such features as war already possessed at the beginning of the nineteenth century are still more marked at the end of the century: a national war; a war of numbers; a war violent and at quick march.

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The nature of war at the end of the nineteenth century: a more and more national war; more and more considerable masses; ever-increasing predominance of the human factor.

ZONE OF MANŒUVRE.—Troops should always be the masters of the ground of their neighbourhood to the limit of their range; otherwise they may be outflanked, caught and destroyed before being able to fight, and this space which has to be kept free from the view and attack of the enemy we call the "Zone of manœuvres."

JUDGMENTS

I

ON WARS

The Civil War in Vendée and (the Napoleonic) Spanish War

THE enlightened soldiers and German patriots of 1812–13 had discovered how to hold their own against the French armies by studying the occasionally victorious resistance which Vendée and Spain, acting alone and unsupported, had furnished. From that study they had deduced processes which, once transferred from the Bocage of Vendée, or from the hilly ground of the Peninsula into the plains of Northern Europe, proved totally inapplicable or powerless. The principle of a national rising had, none the less, survived. They had, therefore, only to determine the forms of war which suited best their own temperament and country in order to attain at last those results which we know they did attain.

Conversely, the misappreciation of "the nature of one's material" explains, to a large extent, the impotence of our armies on the

Loire in 1870–71. The mass-levy, revolutionary in its essence, decreed by the dictator Gambetta, ill suited a certain type of mind which issued from the imperial armies and had been trained to expect little more than order, method and perfect regularity in an armed force.

Campaign of 1796 *in Italy*

See the section "Economy of Force" in *The Principles of War.*

Wars of Napoleon

The whole of this art consisted in "creating number," that is, in having number on one's side at the chosen point of attack; and the means of obtaining this was *economy of force.* Having secured this "creation of number," the next step was to prolong the action of one's machine by making the fullest possible use of the disorder into which the appearance of superior numbers at the decisive point will have thrown the enemy's army, and also the fullest possible use of the moral superiority which such a situation will have created in one's own force. . . . In such a summary you have the formula of Napoleonic war.

Campaign of 1809 *in Austria*

See the passage on "Moral Ascendancy" in *The Principles of War.*

Campaign of 1809 *in Italy*

See the passage on " Strategic Security " in *The Principles of War.*

Campaign of Prussia (1806). (*Battle of Saalfeld*)

The troops set out at a brisk pace, on a fine autumn morning, before dawn (5 a.m.), the air being fresh and biting.

The men were rather heavily loaded with three days' food in their haversacks; they carried only three days' supply because they had already consumed five days' supply out of the eight with which they had started : at Würtzburg (four days' biscuits); at Schweinfurt (four days' bread).

They marched well, in spite of that. We have here the Grand Army in full possession of its powers. Songs were heard all along the column; new songs written for this new war.

At the first halt, the Emperor's proclamations were read to the troops : the proclamation to the army, and that to the peoples of Saxony, through which the army was about to march. They were greeted by thousands of cheers : " Vive l'Empereur ! " which woke the remotest echo of those silent passes. Then the march was resumed at the same brisk pace.

At the head of the troops rode Marshal Lannes, the most brilliant commander of an advance guard ever known, the victor of Montebello, in whom we shall soon find cause to admire calm, measure, caution, as well as decision and energy. He was just thirty-seven years old.

His Chief of Staff represented the elder element in the column : General Victor, forty years old. Then came : Divisional Commander Suchet, thirty-four years old ; Brigadier Claparède, thirty-two ; and Brigadier Reille, thirty-one.

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The Prussian division had its back to the Saale ; in case of a check, it could only retire over the bridge of Saalfeld or over that of Schwarza. It was easy to measure its forces. It could not be reinforced for a long time. Lannes therefore determined to attack, thus keeping to the spirit of the instructions he had received.

What did Prince Louis intend to do on his side ?

Led by a very Prussian instinct, he left to the French the uncomfortable and difficult slopes which rise towards the woods, made for the plain and kept to the bottom of the valley, where regular manœuvres would be easier. It was, indeed, at that time a matter

of principle with the Prussian Army that one should attack in such fashion to rehearse Rosbach all over again; that attack must take place when the enemy debouches from difficult ground, out of a pass, for instance; to attack in echelon was (then) with them the last word of military science. In order to achieve that manœuvre, what you need before all else is an open ground for manœuvre. The Prussians at that time did not know how to fight in any other fashion. *Caput mortuum*, as Frederick would have said.

Moreover, as a result of the eighteenth-century views prevailing within the Prussian Army, they did not doubt that the French would take Saalfeld as an objective. Saalfeld was a storehouse, a road junction, a crossing of the Saale, a complete geographical objective. Unfortunately for Prince Louis, generals trained by the French Revolution ignored that whole science of geographical points, which is foreign to war, which is the very negation of struggle, which is a symptom of decay, which, in any case, is *ce fin du fin qui est la fin des fins*. They knew one thing only, they desired but one thing, a thing which is undeniably the true goal: *the defeat of the enemy.*

The Prussian Army not only lacked sound views; it also lacked food. To mention but

one point, they found it extremely difficult, in this pasture country, and in October to feed the horses of one small division !

There is irony here. An order arrived during the battle to the effect " that the forage rations must be equalized with the greatest care," such rations not being in existence at all. Formalism was expected to save everything.

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Scouting was undertaken ahead, to the right, and to the left; insufficiently strong patrols were supported by the cavalry brigade; the latter had been reinforced by an " élite " battalion. It further disposed of certain artillery with a view to " *taking soundings* " of the ground as well as for *resistance.*

The opportunity had come for tearing through the screen formed by the enemy outposts at the issue of woods; the advance guard had immediately intervened, and, owing to its composition, it had succeeded in getting a clear view of things, at least towards Saalfeld and Crösten.

Light cavalry parties had also occupied Beulwitz as well as the eastern corner of the forest, on the right above the gap of the Saale. They scouted from that point in all directions in order to confirm such reports as had already been received concerning the enemy.

In the presence of this situation, once the Marshal has decided to attack, how will the action develop against the enemy who stood so neatly drawn up at the foot of the hills?

Before organizing the attack, its direction must first of all be fixed. Shall he attack *by the right?* There is no manœuvring space in that direction; moreover, Saalfeld, a strong "point d'appui," closely bordered by the Saale, would have in that case to be carried as a first step.

Shall he attack *in front?* This would amount to taking the bull by the horns, to making it possible for the enemy to use the advantages of his line by means of fire and march. It would mean attacking him in his strongest part.

By the left? There covered ways of access are available as well as an easy manœuvring ground, that is, a wide ground without obstacles yet well provided with cover.

In that direction, the attack may be *prepared* without the enemy *being aware of it:* it may be *launched* without being stopped by important obstacles; it may develop upon the *fullest scale* which the forces available allow.

The attack will therefore be launched on that side, in the space extending between Aue, the Sandberg and Wolsdorf, which

ground is easy to advance over, though hilly.

It was now 10 a.m. The French column was arriving, but its march grew slower, owing to the heat of the day and the congestion of the roads; three or four hours passed before all the forces could be assembled on the reconnoitred ground.

But during such a long lapse of time, the enemy might attack the debouching column; he must be prevented from doing so; that is the task of the advance guard.

To stand on guard by getting hold of everything that helps one to check the enemy's advance, such is the first act in the preparation for battle. Hence the occupation of ridges from which to fire; hence the occupation and defensive organization of villages, so as to increase the resisting power of a force the numbers of which are reduced to a minimum.

The *assembled* enemy may also *change place*, undertake a manœuvre, in short, alter the dispositions against which our attack is being organized. How can he be prevented from doing so? By attacking him, but without risking anything; with weak numbers but on a wide front, so as to spare the forces. Hence an offensive made by small units starting from villages which shall remain

occupied. Thus we shall see in this battle swarms of skirmishers advancing through gardens, orchards, hollow roads, in order to threaten the enemy and to extend the action far ahead from the outskirts of the villages.

After having been first used as *centres of resistance*, those villages next become *starting-points* for a number of offensive actions.

To sum up, a number of occupied villages marking the ground with strong points, and connected with each other by means of lines of skirmishers, who, being on the ridges, can see and act while under cover and provide elements for a partial offensive : such is the first line.

There must be in the rear a reserve of mobile troops kept for an emergency. This reserve will be, in our present case, composed of cavalry.

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From the corner of the wood to Beulwitz the distance was 3500 yards; Lannes was not afraid, as we have seen, to spread, for the purposes of an advance guard, over so considerable a front, only three battalions and a half and the cavalry brigade; and this with muskets the efficient range of which was not superior to 150 or 200 yards. Such are the dispositions, such the dispersion, to which some people object even nowadays, with

quick-firing rifles which really and powerfully sweep the ground over a range of 1200 to 1500 yards. They object to such dispositions by quoting the regulations which prescribe that the front of a battalion in action must never be more than 300 yards. Those regulations were never meant to contradict what we see Marshal Lannes doing here. For the object, here, is not to beat the enemy, therefore no "front of action" is in question. Troops are so far only taking possession of the ground, which they do by putting a certain number of watchmen at all the entrances—watchmen who should be able to shut the doors if a thief comes, and also, after having strongly established themselves, to beat up the neighbourhood and see what has become of the thief, and, if need be, to chase him.

We shall soon have the combat, the attack proper; *then* we shall see the fronts comply with the rules; *then* we shall find the average front of a battalion to be far less than 300 yards.

Such a situation, once secured on the French side, was to continue for some time without much change. Meanwhile the whole first part of the programme was carried out, that is, *preparation*.

* * * * *

At the same time an order arrived from Prince Hohenlohe to remain at Rudolstadt and not to attack. A retreat by Schwarza, in case of a check, became more and more important. Prince Louis ordered the foot battery and the 1st Müfling battalion to occupy the Sandberg.

* * * * *

We have, then, the *whole* of the French cavalry, the *whole* of the French artillery (less two guns) and *four infantry regiments* (out of five) attacking at once an enemy already shaken by fire, so as to finish him off; attacking *by surprise*, that is, with an *undeniable* superiority of means, *suddenly*, and from *a short distance*, that very point of the enemy line which had been selected as the easiest to approach and had been specially prepared as a point of attack: the front of the attack is 1500 or 1800 yards wide for all the acting troops; this is less than the 300 yards of front to a battalion prescribed by the regulations.

The theory which has been put in practice is here obvious: one clearly sees how the manœuvre of long duration (from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) aims exclusively at bringing about the powerful, undisputable conclusion by means of all the main forces; such a conclusion being preceded by a preparation to

which the *smallest numbers possible* were devoted.

That preparation includes the combat of the advance guard, the object of which was reconnoitring, fixing, if need be stopping the enemy; this combat is followed by a frontal attack which completes the enemy's immobilization and wears him; it ends in a decisive attack, a surprise in time and space, effected by means of number, speed, choice of starting-point, and of a peculiar violence which turns the attack into an avalanche.

When we try to apply our theory to modern circumstances, changes must of course be made, so as to take into account the influence of modern arms upon battle; but the picture remains the same in the main.

The battle of Saalfeld, had it to be fought to-day, would not be conducted in any other fashion.

* * * * *

What a methodical spirit there is in this action conducted by the young Marshal! One wonders which deserves to be most admired in him, the *enlightened wisdom* with which he patiently prepared the battle for six hours, or the *fitness* and *dash* with which he launched his final attack. So true is it that the art of fighting does not consist, even with the most eager and energetic of chiefs,

even when the best of troops are available, in falling on the enemy blindly.

* * * * *

The Simonet artillery section had fired 264 rounds. The divisional artillery had not used up quite so much ammunition—about 236 rounds. The infantry had fired about 200,000 cartridges, which makes the rather considerable average of 20 per man.

Campaign of 1813–1814

See the passage on "Strategical Security" in *The Principles of War.*

Campaign of 1815

See the passage on "Strategical Security" in *The Principles of War,* and also, in the *Judgments on Men,* see "Blücher," "Wellington" and "Ziethen."

The War of 1866 (*The Battle of Nachod*)

The contrasting distribution on the ground of each of these two opposing army corps, 5th Prussian and 6th Austrian, shows better than any words could do how each side understood war, how each side made war.

On the Prussian side we see:

An army corps assembled, astride of the road it is to follow, its reserves behind it on the same road; it is ready to *act* with all its

means; its commander is with the troops, effectively commanding; here we have a true combination of a *force* and a *will*. Moreover, after Steinmetz shall have moved his army corps, he will have effected a junction with the advance guard; he will be on the 27th, at 8 a.m., at Nachod.

An advance guard is already holding the road far ahead, on the Mettau, ensuring the tactical security of that corps, clearing the road for it; so deeply conscious of its mission that, as early as in the evening of the 26th, it has got up as far as Nachod.

Early on the 27th, a *flank guard* will be sent to Giesshübel in order to protect the movement. Giesshübel lies in Austrian territory; by occupying it on August 26th, the offensive scheme which had just been framed was sure to be disclosed. None the less occupied it was, in order to protect the movement of the army corps once that movement had begun.

Such dispositions clearly show what *sense of action* inspired to the highest degree the commander of the army corps and the commander of the advance guard. They were both securing, by means of that advance guard (preparation), of that flank guard (protection) the *possibility* of carrying out the single action which was to be undertaken with

all forces well in hand and in the same direction.

Their idea was to act with everything on one point; they were free to do it, owing to security; they were about to attain a decision owing to the economy of forces which had been achieved in apportioning those forces throughout the column.

On the Austrian side:

The army corps has deployed on a front of more than six miles, which enables it to get housing, to live, and to march comfortably. It is a situation which does well enough so long as no enemy is present, but it little corresponds to the necessities of war. Besides, the army corps is distributed in five distinct elements: four brigades and an artillery reserve.

Suppose, then, the enemy (who in war is always the prime objective of all combinations) should disclose his presence, the 6th Corps would not be in a position to act owing to its being scattered: it ought to be possible for the Austrian forces to join up, but no time is left for that; there is no service of security which might provide the two or three quiet hours required for concentration on the front of more than six miles which has been taken up.

The Austrian Higher Command perceived only the subjective part of its task: securing

the means of keeping and leading an army. It had completely lost sight of the object to which that army is devoted: *fighting*. Nothing was prepared for carrying on fighting under good conditions. The notion of war, the sense of action, had disappeared; they had been replaced by mere staff work, though staffs have always been incapable of creating, of themselves alone, such a thing as *victory*.

* * * * *

The Prussian cavalry remained in action right up to the end. After breaking the attempts made by the enemy infantry to debouch from the wood, they attacked the enemy artillery, captured three guns, and afterwards carried out the pursuit. Although their professional value was inferior to that of the Austrian cavalry, they knew how to fulfil their mission in the battle, how to act in compliance with the advance guard's tactics; above all, they were handled by a commander who utilized them to the utmost right up to the end.

The Austrian artillery had also proved very superior to the Prussian artillery in armament, in tactics and in training; they were, in consequence, superior in their fire. They inflicted on the successively arriving Prussian batteries losses which prevented the latter from keeping up the struggle. In

spite of that, the Prussians conquered at the end of the day. Artillery action is not, then, any more than cavalry action, of such a decisive character as definitely to decide the issue of any contest.

We shall in future wars frequently see an artillery duel remain undecided on account of the length of range and of the difficulty of finding cover against the various directions from which the enemy may present his fire. The batteries occupied in this function of meeting the enemy's fire ought, therefore, to seize those points on the flank of the attack whence an artillery surprise might appear, and also to discover and receive the general counter-attack which cannot fail to take place in the course of the action.

The War of 1870

(The reader must not expect under this heading even the briefest summary of the military operations which have been dealt with in so masterful a fashion in Marshal Foch's book *The Conduct of War.* Save for several leading episodes and a few explanations which were absolutely necessary for the comprehension of the events described, the only things here reproduced are the judgments of the Marshal on the more prominent points of the campaign.)

(a) *Moltke's Plan and Concentration*

[*Following his plan, which had been drawn up in* 1869, *Moltke did not cover the concentration*

of the German armies which were to operate against France by any force capable of resisting an enemy offensive. The thirteen army corps were concentrated in three masses :

The 1st *Army* (*Steinmetz*), (*7th, 8th, and later the* 1st *Corps and two divisions of cavalry*), *in the region of Treves.*

2nd Army (*Frederick Charles*), (*3rd, 4th and* 10*th Corps, Guard, and two divisions of cavalry*), *in the region of Mayence.*

3rd Army (*Prince Royal of Prussia*), (*5th and* 11*th Prussian Corps,* 1*st and 2nd Bavarian Corps, the Würtemburg Corps, and two divisions of cavalry*), *in the region of Landau.*

The 6th and 7th Corps formed for the moment a Strategic Reserve.]

If Moltke found security for his concentration in distance alone and forbade himself all effective covering troops, he was guided to this conclusion by political reasons. He had a high idea of the value of the French, as he had followed them in the Crimea, in Italy, and in Mexico; and he desired at the outset to preserve the German troops from any kind of check, even from any retirement. The neutrality of Austria and of Italy and the alliance of southern Germany could only thus be made absolutely certain. Further, would the 1st Prussian Corps thrown forward

as covering troops manœuvre with sufficient suppleness to escape ruin and disaster? The crude doctrine of "going forwards," which had been so warmly taught for several years past, might have received at the very threshold of the war a formal contradiction and a blow which would have definitely ruined its prestige. And how would it have been possible to have made such an army fight in retreat and then afterwards launch it again to the attack?

These were no doubt the difficulties which had struck Moltke, although he was a disciple of Clausewitz. He was an example of the gulf that separates theory from practice. He believed in mathematics rather than in manœuvre, and in number rather than in moral force. He did not judge himself capable of a greater hazard than that which he adopted, and though he thus proved himself upon a lower plane than Napoleon, one cannot avoid admiration for the wisdom of a man who co-ordinated his views with his means, and who, though by way of less genius and in a more plodding fashion, yet through an exact knowledge and a just observation of his adversary, discovered the way to dominate that adversary continuously and to attain results which have never been surpassed in history.

[*Moltke proposed to march upon Paris, leaving on one side the French Army, which he was persuaded would come up to accept battle.*]

He did not envisage the case of the French manœuvring otherwise than upon the direct line, changing their groupment, condensing their forces to the right or to the left and striking against one of his wings. The idea of a manœuvre seemed to him as unrealizable for his adversary as for himself.

[*Moltke put together a general advance guard of seventy-six squadrons, distributed across all his front, supported by an infantry division, and proceeding about one day's march in front of the army.*]

The task of reconnaissance was set to detachments of cavalry sent out in the most diverse directions and supported by infantry units, some of which were carried by vehicles.

Such a method as this is very weak; for it is incapable of seeing through any service of security which has been seriously organized. It is incapable from its lack of means of attack (infantry and artillery) of compelling the enemy to show himself if he does not wish to do so. Therefore this system of reconnaissance only allows you to discover what the enemy has been good enough to allow you

to discover. Under this system to get to work Moltke needed twenty-four hours. He would have that space of time at his disposal, so it seemed, if the enemy were to strike against the 5th Division. But at the end of that space of time what would he have been able to concentrate? Obviously no more than the forces within one day's march. And of what strength were they?

[*Turning to the programme of the marches which had been arranged, we see that the concentrations possible within a limit of twenty-four hours were as follows.*]

The 2nd Army could concentrate on itself.
The 1st Army could concentrate on itself.
The 3rd Army could concentrate on itself.

Therefore if the enemy were to attack at the end of the period allowed he would strike one of these armies, the 2nd, the 1st, or the 3rd, but only one. In other words, he would have only one-third of the total adversary forces opposed to him. The three armies were too far apart one from the other to join and take part in a common affair.

He would come to the same result if, instead of concentrating each army upon itself, a general concentration were attempted upon some one point of the front.

And this inconvenience would be exagger-

ated if the enemy were to appear without attacking the 5th Division. Now the enemy might very well so appear, as we see when we consider the extent of ground over which he had the choice of attack. In that case even the twenty-four hours' delay would be eliminated.

[*Moltke envisages and organizes a priori according to a set plan a battle upon the Sarre before he has any precise information upon the French Army.*]

I. He could get this battle of his upon the Sarre on the 8th and 9th of August: (*a*) if the French did not attack before the date fixed; (*b*) if the French did not retire; or (*c*) if the French manœuvred neither to right nor to left. In a word, this combination of Moltke's could only succeed against an enemy who was of his own nature, as it were, immobile; since there was nothing in the plan of attack to pin and hold him in the interval between the making of that plan and the day fixed for the battle.

II. Further:

(*a*) If the French were to attack before the 8th or the 9th not all the three German armies could be present at the battle—as we saw above.

(*b*) If the French were to retire the manœuvre would strike a blow in the void. It would be necessary to plan out another manœuvre, and a critical situation would arise and would remain in being during the whole period of such preparation. For the armies would not only have struck in the void, but would have also effected a concentration for that purpose. They would have got into a dense formation which would necessarily hold them immobile for some days.

(*c*) Were the French to manœuvre by the right or by the left of the point of attack chosen by the Germans, notably were they to attack towards the east, the German manœuvre which had thus been settled in advance would create an entanglement which might last indefinitely, and in the midst of which it would be necessary to take up a new direction and to plan and put in movement the new manœuvre required.

III. A decision was obtained by a single army upon one wing (the 3rd Army in the Battle of the Sarre).

It was about one-third of the total forces available. A large mass, no doubt, and capable of securing a tactical result, a day's victory; but on the other hand incapable of drawing from that result the immense

consequences which follow from manœuvre and from the Napoleonic type of battle, in which, as we shall see below, the obtaining of a decision depends upon the use of the bulk of one's forces.

IV. The reunion of forces had to be made upon the battlefield itself, and during the action; the 1st, 2nd and 3rd armies, uniting upon the Sarre towards the 9th of August. (So it was with Sadowa, for the three armies of 1866). This operation therefore remained up to the very last day uncertain, hazardous, and at the mercy of the adversary's manœuvre. It left in the same uncertainty the final tactical result to be obtained, the decision.

Let us contrast against this conception of attack—Moltke's—(that is, against the direct manœuvre effected with the same force as that which gives battle) the system of Napoleon. Whether we are dealing with the campaign of 1805, of 1806, or of 1807, the force that gives battle, organized in triple column or mass, possesses a *head*, a special organ, which is the general advance guard—in 1806 this was the 1st Reserve Corps of cavalry, under the orders of Murat. The manœuvre consists in seeking out the adversary with this advance guard, which is of sufficient strength for such a task, and which

can, if necessary, be reinforced. Then only, with the mass of his troops, with his whole army, with his battle force informed upon the enemy's position, and reunited in one whole before the action, the Emperor manœuvred and attacked the adversary, already pinned by his advance guard. He turned that adversary with the mass of his army, appearing and acting in one gesture against the lines of communication. It is thus that we get those battles with reversed fronts which are the characteristic of Napoleonic wars and the consequences of which are so considerable.

When we compare these leaders of armies from the point of view of the way in which they join battle, we see Napoleon turning the enemy's army *before* the battle with the *mass* of his own army which he has already gathered together, and only attacking after this had been done. We see Moltke turning his adversary *during* the battle with only a *part* of his forces (the 3rd Army in the Battle of the Sarre), and effecting his concentration upon the battlefield itself by the convergence of columns. The first leader aims with more security at a victory which will be more fruitful in results, thanks to a strategy moulded upon an axis of attack which would allow such result, and thanks to the conduct

of troops which he can combine with mastery both of time and of space through his use of an advance guard.

In Napoleon's manœuvre there appears a very real danger, which is that while one is preparing to turn one's adversary one may oneself be turned, and that in advancing to cut the communications of one's adversary one may lose one's own. Hence it is that we see that great man so much preoccupied with his line of operations. Hence it is also that in 1806, to quote but one example, he provides himself with a double base, the Danube and the Rhine.

With modern armies, which are too large to be supported on occupied country alone, and which can only exist by being fed from the country behind them, the consequences of a manœuvre against the lines of communication are considerably increased. If it makes good the enemy is ruined. On the other hand, since these communications are relatively short they are easy to cover. It is very difficult, indeed, to reach them, as also to prepare and to execute a battle with reversed front, seeing the vast numbers of modern effectives and certain other modern conditions.

[*The immense size of the means at our*

disposal to-day of men and provisionment of all kinds, the vastness of what one has to transport, and consequently the necessity of arranging long beforehand a relatively rigid plan of transport, have this consequence: that concentration must be decided and carried out almost fully before any information upon the enemy has reached us.]

Perhaps we ought to seek in these modern difficulties of execution the reason which made Moltke confine himself to a more prosaic manœuvre than the manœuvre of Napoleon with its artistry and genius. For that prosaic manœuvre is easier to bring to success. If so, we must recognize once more the prudence and wisdom of a theory which maintained the principle of *force in action*, which is always true. He relied on frontal attack and on such an attack being decisive, but only because it seemed to him the best application of force that could be made, given the proportion of the effectives and the manner to which he was limited in his conduct of his enterprise. Such as it was, this method determined an arrangement of forces undoubtedly judicious, if we analyze it as an occupation of the front, but equally doubtful if we analyse it in depth.

For so far as the forces are organized in

depth—that is, if we are considering the relations between the more advanced and the less advanced troops—we have seen that Moltke's theory of an advance guard was that of a large cavalry body supported, but at some marches' distance behind, by a division of infantry; and that this suffered from two defects: (1) it was doubtful as an organism for obtaining information; (2) it was an organism with an insufficient power of resistance.

But—what is much more important—he did not even call this organ into being as one united force, and he did not keep it under his sole orders. He distributed all his disposable forces between his three armies. With what result? Each army having its own goal devotes to the attainment of that goal all the means at its disposal. Therefore the cavalry corps, which the theory takes for granted, no longer really exists, and the task which was thought indispensable for the development of the general and common manœuvre is not fulfilled.

We learn a lesson directly from this consideration. In order that the service of an advance guard—which even Moltke had recognized to be necessary—should be assured, it is essential that this advance guard should be constituted as one organism,

independent of the armies and under the direct orders of the General Commanding-in-Chief.

As for Moltke, seeing that he had no such particular organ to hand, we can easily foresee that two things will happen to him :

1. He will not get information, or if he does he will be the last to obtain it; and in the absence of information he will either postpone his decisions or he will make them upon hypothetical situations, and to do that is to act blindly.

2. In the lack of covering troops to render secure the concentration of all his forces, those forces, dispersed for the purpose of marching, will come upon the enemy by surprise without having had the time to unite.

We may sum up by saying that all informed strategic direction is organically forbidden him by the very nature of his disposition, and that he will be condemned to advance his armies from one surprise to another. And what will be the result of that? The action of his troops answers the question. Thus led, they will of course strike the moment they meet the enemy, not because they have orders to do so, but because they have no orders to the contrary—nor could they have, since they did not know where the enemy was to be found. Thrust suddenly into the

presence of the adversary, they have to decide for themselves, and nothing but the military spirit can dictate the conduct they shall pursue.

While the Higher Command still keeps its decisions in reserve the troops conclude their action. While the Higher Command abstains from effective direction on account of the mist which surrounds it, the armies take direction upon their own account. It is they that conduct the strategic manœuvre, which in effect has passed into other hands than that of the Higher Command.

Lacking all foundation for action, all knowledge of the subject in hand, the primordial instinct of action inspires the troops and they attack. The strategical manœuvre designed increases its activity, but can it continue to exist as a deliberate manœuvre? That is what we are about to examine.

The troops join battle in a complete ignorance of the enemy's general situation and of the situation of the particular army they are meeting. Hence you have two grave flaws at the very outset of their action. First, from the tactical point of view they are in very great danger of striking an adversary far superior to themselves; secondly, from the strategic point of view, battle would be joined in a point not chosen by the Higher

Command at a moment not chosen by it either, and in a fashion which its will has not decided. Battle thus conducted is improvised, unforeseen, and cannot be fully guided. Such are the necessary conclusions of this method. The issue would be fatal in the presence of an active adversary, and we sum up the whole by saying that an action which has been engaged ill by its strategy leads surely to disaster, save where superior tactics turn the scale in its favour: for these last are always decisive.

Let us then retain the following conclusion: The superiority of the Napoleonic combination, with its advance guard, which not only procures an attack with those great effects of which we have just spoken, but also gives security. For that advance guard allows one to strike *where* one wills, as one wills and when one wills, and that with full information; the advance guard being organized to discover, to attack, to resist, and to retire.

Let us take things as they stood after the campaign of 1806.

As against this avowed incapacity of the German organization—that is, of the German Higher Command—as against this necessity in which it found itself of always consulting the decisions of subordinates, are not both

the organization and the theory of Napoleon superior? His theory guaranteed the power of really commanding by organizing *security* against the enterprise of the enemy, and therefore against the premature action of his own troops. It prevented his projects from being blocked and his calculations upset. That theory further guaranteed his troops against the attractive effect of battle until the moment when he himself desired to exercise it. It gave endurance to that which is commonly only a flash of light, and it gave it such endurance by making security permanent in the hands of the General in Command, and thus making him capable of effectively directing operations.

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We can easily see in this twentieth century where such conceptions as Bernhardi's would lead to. Napoleon's higher conception of surprise was a surprise effected first in space and then in time. But Bernhardi uses only one of these terms. He depends upon a surprise in terms of time, that is, upon the rapidity of executon dependent upon very minute preparation, and therefore he leaves aside the other elements on which a manœuvre should be built.

* * * * *

The German General Headquarters reached

Mayence on the 7th August, 1870. If the French had attacked before that date they would not only have found armies in the disorder of formation, but even armies not yet provided with command.

And when the command was organized it continued at Mayence. General Headquarters proposed to direct operations upon the basis of information coming from the Saar, seventy-five miles off, information to be obtained for it by the cavalry screen of the 2nd Army.

That is as much as to say that the information would be insufficient. For though the telegraphic transmission of news in a sense eliminates distance, yet Headquarters, under these conditions, would get a very distant *impression:* Headquarters would not have that real knowledge which can only be provided by local atmosphere. Moreover, the cavalry screen in question, squadrons reconnoitring and directed to their task by the Commander of the 2nd Army, could not be fully conversant at every moment with the intentions or needs of General Headquarters at Mayence. The result was that the latter either did not get the information it needed, or got it tardily or incompletely; and all this was due to the lack of an organ at once suitable to its function and under its direct orders.

In a similar situation Napoleon would have visited his own advance guard, not only with the object of learning things more rapidly but also with the object of seeing things for himself and at first hand; with the object of himself directing his own service of information, and of keeping in hand the conduct of that advance corps upon whose discoveries and progress his manœuvre would be founded.

(b) *The March to the Saar (from 3rd to 6th August,* 1870).

[*Moltke took the offensive on the 3rd August. The 3rd Army had orders to cross the river Lauter and enter Alsace. The 1st and 2nd Armies were to march to the Saar River. Orders which had been misunderstood led to a dispute between Steinmetz and Frederick Charles. The former refused to leave free the roads which were necessary to the marching of the latter. Meanwhile, Napoleon III launched the whole of the 2nd Corps (under Frossard) reconnoitring in the direction of Saarbrück, where there was nothing but a thin covering screen of the enemy.*]

The concentration of the German 2nd Army was protected by nothing but distance. Its cavalry, disposed in three groups, was to be employed according to this same absence

of principle, the neglect of an advance guard. The Commander went so far as to divide it into four columns, to wit, on the right two columns: the Redern Brigade of the 5th Division was to march on Volklingen by Nahe, and the Barby Brigade of the same division was to march on the same place by another road to the left. In the centre, the 6th Division of Cavalry was to march on Neunkirchen by way of the Glau Valley, while on the left the Bredow Brigade, reinforced by one more regiment and accompanied by General Rheinbaben, was to march by way of Alzey to Durckheim, Kaiserslautern and Homburg.

These mounted troops had been given the mission, according to the instructions of Frederick Charles, to hide the movement of his forces from the enemy, and at the same time to discover the general situation, positions and movements of the enemy. In particular to appreciate at their just value any incursions which the French might make into German territory.

This cavalry was followed at an interval of a day's march by two divisions of infantry marching by two separate roads: the 5th Division of the 3rd Prussian Corps and the 8th Division of the 4th.

But the army could only have been informed

during its march by this large body of cavalry on the one condition, that the enemy should continue motionless, and should leave an empty space between him and the German advance. In the contrary case, that is, in the case of a partial offensive, however restricted, the French would have compelled the German cavalry to retreat, and that without this cavalry being in any way able to measure the importance of the attack; and in such a case the German cavalry would have lacked means of resistance. The German Command suspended the march across the wooded region without any serious reason, then, without waiting further, it chose to abandon information, and on the 31st July ordered the 2nd Army to advance.

But observe that if the French had taken the offensive, had sent one of their Army Corps to observe the 1st Army, and, with their other four Army Corps, had marched against the 2nd Army, they would, at the opening of August, have found that 2nd German Army in the following position: its 3rd Corps would have been debouching from Worrstadt with the 10th Corps behind it on the march, and its 4th Corps would have been debouching from Kaiserslautern eighteen miles away from the road by which the last-named bodies were debouching, and behind

that 4th Corps—a long way behind—was the Guard.

Clearly a situation of that kind was excellent for the four French army corps. They would have arrived without meeting any obstacle capable of checking their march and have found themselves able to strike at three German corps at the most. What would then have become of Moltke's thesis: "Prince Frederick Charles will have at his disposition more than 194,000 infantry"? The Prince would indeed have had that number at his disposition, but he could not have withdrawn them in time from the wooded district which was crossed by only two roads, and he therefore could not have presented them all together against his adversary. His weakness would have been due to the lack of an advance guard, which, had it existed, would have been able both to have informed him of the urgent need for concentration and also guaranteed him by its resistance the time in which to realize that concentration. Security, which the Germans had thought to establish by the mere deployment of their cavalry screen, was lacking, and the situation of their army was precarious.

On the 31st July, Napoleon III received information that Steinmetz at the head of the 7th and 8th German Army Corps was

marching southwards. He further heard that great masses of troops were concentrating at Mayence and at Mannheim.

But the Commanders of the French army corps informed him that they were not yet ready to pass the offensive, and in consequence of this situation the French General Headquarters decided on a compromise. It was a decision which would necessarily fail to reach any object. What was ordered was an offensive reconnaissance which would, as they thought, compel the enemy to disclose his strength. This reconnaissance was conducted by the 2nd French Corps marching on Saarbrück and supported on its right by a division of the 5th French Corps debouching from Sarreguemines on the right bank of the Saar, and on its left by a division of the 3rd French Corps acting against Wehrden. Further to the west there was to be a demonstration by the 4th French Corps at Saarlouis.

It was under such conditions as these that the affair of Saarbrück was engaged on the 2nd August. This affair, in which were engaged the French forces just enumerated, began at ten o'clock in the morning and ended shortly after noon. All this great mass of French troops only came across two Prussian companies and afterwards one Prussian bat-

talion (the 2nd Battalion of the 40th Regiment), and these were soon compelled to retreat with a loss of four officers and seventy-nine men. That was the affair of Saarbrück, which has been called ironically, but very justly, "A battle of three divisions against three companies," or, again, "A manœuvre against an imaginary enemy."

One lesson stands out clearly from the event.

Quite a weak force (the one Prussian battalion in this case), even though attacked by vastly superior forces, will be neither surprised nor destroyed if it puts up a guard and knows how to manœuvre a retreat; knowledge which is the proper rôle of covering troops, whose business is not to obtain victory but to permit the preparation thereof.

On our side the very contrary to this took place. The day after the morrow of Saarbrück, the Douai Division, which had for its mission the rôle of acting as advance guard to the army of Alsace, was thrown away in sheer loss at Wissembourg because it had not guarded itself but had allowed itself to be surprised; that is, because it had not known how to carry out the functions of a covering organ.

As for the final result of the French operation of the 2nd August, it was nil. Nor

could it be otherwise. The French had mere empty spaces before them; they were perfectly free to cross the Saar. But their Commanders had not the intention, nor had they put themselves into a position, to profit by those circumstances, and had the spaces not been empty, but filled with the adversary in force, then the action of the French Commanders would have called down upon them a storm which they had not the means to receive. Once more do we see an example of this prime truth: one does not reconnoitre with the mere object of reconnaissance but with the object of obtaining information for an operation which one has all the means for carrying out.

On the German side there continued to exist divergent views in the command of the 1st Army, because Moltke did not explain himself sufficiently, and issued dispatches that were too brief. The Supreme Command was not properly obeyed because it was not understood. Its plan for reaching and fighting its adversary was upset by an insufficiently *directing* order, even before it was begun. We conclude that it is not enough to draw remarkable plans, but that it is necessary to add to these, from the very opening of operations and during all their execution, an effective command which fully communi-

cates its thought and its will and gets that thought and will fully executed by its subordinates. Moltke, as Chief of the General Staff, achieved only half of each of these two tasks.

Contrast him, here, with the way in which Napoleon acted during the period of "fog" which is always characteristic of the opening of a campaign. In spite of his uncontested authority we find him writing to his Marshals letters several pages long with the sole object of thoroughly indoctrinating them: showing them exactly what he wants. For Napoleon knew very well, essentially authoritative man though he was and chary of superfluous explanation, that an order which through its short and imperative form eliminates argument and prevents discussion may well, on that very account, prove insufficient to fully "brief" those subordinates who stand in the highest places of the military hierarchy. He knew that mere blind obedience does not necessarily involve a rational and logical execution of an order, an execution conformable to the intention of the Commander-in-Chief. To get oneself understood one must explain: one must speak or write at some length. Apart from mere orders a General has to give to his subordinates directions; and apart from directions he must maintain an

ordinary correspondence with them. In military, as in civil life, if people wish to understand each other they must write and they must speak to each other. Silence or laconical phrases only suffice the Commander under those conditions where he is making no demand upon the intelligence of his subordinates.

(c) *The Battle of Spicheren* (*6th August*)

[*The 2nd French Corps* (*Frossard*) *lay between Saarbrück and Forbach on the heights of Spicheren. The four Divisions of the 3rd Corps under Bazaine lay round Sarreguemines, Marienthal, Puttelange and St. Avold on the sector of a circle which had Saarbrück for its centre and a radius of about twelve miles. The 4th French Corps under Ladmirault was at Boulay, the Guard at Courcelles. Steinmetz, who had been wrongly directed by Moltke, launched the 7th German Corps on the Saar. Kamecke attacked the French with the 14th German Division. The 8th German Corps came up in aid. On our side the four Divisions of the 3rd French Army Corps did not move. Their intervention on the evening of the 6th August might have led to the destruction of the whole 1st German Army, which had engaged itself up to the hilt and was by that evening thoroughly worn out.*]

The decision which the German General Kamecke, though he commanded no more than a division, had taken off his own bat, produced the Battle of Spicheren. As this German offensive had been neither desired nor prepared by the German Higher Command it ran the risk of falling with insufficient forces and without any general direction upon an intact enemy with regard to whom the Staff of the 14th Division had only the vaguest information.

The consequences of this decision were incalculable. Common sense demanded that before attempting the adventure of the Rotherberg its results should have been gauged. Common sense demanded that, before attacking, the adversary should have been reconnoitred in order to find out in what strength he was on this point and on the neighbouring heights; for on this point, as on others, General Kamecke's decision went wrong from lack of information. He attacked without knowing what he had in front of him and without seeking to know it. General Kamecke's decision proceeded neither from a rational interpretation of his own rôle as Commander of a 1st Line Division in a group of several armies, nor from an acquired knowledge of the enemy's situation, which he systematically left unconsidered. His deci-

sion proceeded simply from military ardour, from the preconceived and fixed idea of always attacking. It is, no doubt, a sentiment which a soldier must respect, but it is not sufficient to settle the conduct of advance-guard Commanders. It is their business, above all, to work for the advantage of the masses following them, to prepare for a manœuvre which has been planned by a higher command (which aims, of course, at fighting with all its strength), and of this manœuvre the Commanders of the advance guard had neither the task of hastening the date nor determining the site.

Let no one read into the above criticism any attack upon those most necessary military virtues, initiative and the offensive spirit. They are present in more than one Chief of Napoleon's Grand Army, but their acts constantly show us that they associated these virtues with another equally necessary one—discipline—and especially discipline of the intelligence. They show further how this virtue of discipline in the Subordinate Command, by extending the action of the Superior Command (which continually enlightens and leads them) made it possible to realize great general operations which the German School of 1870 thought to reach by the mere initiative of subordinates left to themselves: sub-

ordinates who were ignorant of what an absent Higher Command desired, and found themselves in front of an enemy of whom they had very little information.

To return to Spicheren.

The sound of Kamecke's cannon, that of the 14th Division, called to the field of battle the 16th Division, and, further, called to the field the 5th Division of the German 2nd Army. There was a unity in views, an activity, an initiative, a confidence and a solidarity in the Prussian Army, which ran through all ranks; and thus, immediately called on to an improvised battle, these three divisions from three different corps turned what might have been a death-stroke into a living action. Every Commander had the hardihood to act and to decide, and the superior, though his inferior had acted too hastily, adopted and approved of the decision which was taken and modelled his conduct upon the dispositions which had resulted. On every side you have the feeling for action, the necessity for the offensive in all its splendour. An army which is thus electrified from top to bottom with such a spirit of drive is already very nearly victorious.

The Battle of Spicheren arose from the interpretation of a certain situation on the part of Commanders of 1st line troops, which

situation was unexpected and which situation they were not in a position to judge fully; yet before the end of the day the equivalent of two whole army corps was working together on that chance battlefield.

That is a result which is very well worthy of remark, especially if we observe that it was uniquely due to the spirit of solidarity and of comradeship and not to the action of the Higher Command. Nevertheless these effectives were quite insufficient for the attack upon a powerful and intact army in excellent *moral*, such as was the French Army on the 6th August, 1870.

In sum total: the battle was not prepared in any way. It broke out in a fashion not considered. It was engaged without order and was conducted in a fashion which could not be explained. In undertaking this action the Commanders of the advance guard, General Kamecke especially, trod underfoot that idea of the *manœuvre* and the "*Battle between all the armies*," to which idea their Chief, Moltke, was, unknown to them, subordinating everything. They began to plead without having all their brief. They launched that great argument, the battle, without having it fully in hand. They ran the very greatest risks for the obtaining of a victory which had no appreciable result. In place

of that battle of two whole armies which had been prepared by the Germans on the Lauter for the 7th, in place of that battle of three whole armies prepared upon the Saar for the 9th, what had taken place was an awkward blow with three divisions only against a single French corps. There was indeed a tactical success but none of those great results which might have been expected from Moltke's full manœuvre. That manœuvre aimed a blow, with the whole of his forces acting in surprise against the still incomplete and inactive mass of the various French corps. It would logically have resulted in a Sedan in Lorraine. Kamecke's decision produced the thunderclap of Spicheren, and that thunderclap warned the French and saved them (for the moment) from complete destruction.

We conclude that no system of command will work which thus leaves some projected manœuvre (and battle especially) at the mercy of a decision taken rightly or wrongly by a subordinate Commander who is necessarily ignorant of the general situation.

Moltke thought he could provide for everything, either commanding informed from day to day, as in 1866, or himself arranging the movements of his army corps. In the place of the directions and general instructions

which Steinmetz, finding himself left ignorant, demanded, and in place of those long letters from Napoleon to his Marshals, Moltke gave nothing but short telegrams, and events show how wrong was this method of action.

The truth is that there was lack of any true Higher Command. Moltke was no more than a Chief of a Staff, and his action never exceeded the intellectual functions of that position. He constantly appeals to brain-work, to reason, and especially to calculation when he is projecting a manœuvre; but he then remains content with confiding it to paper, he remains content with a daily order, concise and terse, instead of being at the pains to make it thoroughly understood and therefore realized. The German armies lacked a united command at their head which could hope to impose his plan upon men and chiefs and realize it: which at the right moment could take in one hand and direct the unique and decisive argument of war to action of battle. It is because Moltke had not this faculty of command that he had to carry on, right up to the 18th of August, the attack which he had prepared upon the Saar for the 9th, and which had escaped him not through his enemy's action but through the initiative of his subordinates.

Even admitting that Moltke should have

acted in the clearest fashion and should have been thoroughly obeyed, he could not, lacking an advance guard, guarantee any duration to the manœuvre he had projected; for he was not able to prevent his battle force from stumbling into a premature action which should have nothing to do with the great affair he had in mind. His system of attack with the centre and two wings would only work with an enemy who himself did not attack, did not retire, did not manœuvre, wholly infirm and yielding to any foreign seizure.

The French dispositions had permitted by the 7th August the following concentration: the 3rd French Corps at Puttelange, the 4th French Corps at High Homburg, and the French Guard in the neighbourhood of St. Avold; and, to unite with that mass of men, the 2nd Corps which had not been destroyed at Spicheren. They could therefore attack upon the left bank of the Saar the three German Corps—7th, 8th and 3rd—which were quite isolated, and could attack them with a mass of 130,000 men. During two whole days, the 7th and 8th August, these three German corps were in the presence, and at the mercy, of the whole united French forces of Lorraine.[1]

[1] As this passage, like many others in the book, consists of portions of a main work put together for

[*Owing to the lack of a general advance guard Moltke marched with bandaged eyes, and after the Battle of Spicheren lost contact with the French during their retreat.*]

On the evening of the 8th August, the Commander of the German 2nd Army having found nothing in front of him during his manœuvre against the French forces in Alsace, and, further, receiving no instruction from General Headquarters, which was no better informed than himself, took no further disposition for the 9th and limited himself to ordering the corps in the 1st line to bring up their columns to the advance positions, and to those of the 2nd line to concentrate. Once more the necessary consequence of giving up the principle of seeking the enemy's principal army in order to fight it was immobility. For the same reasons the German General Headquarters at Homburg, being

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the sake of brevity, the general thesis may need some explanation. I would point out to the reader that Marshal Foch's object in this examination of the War of 1870 is twofold: first, he shows how the German Higher Command neglected the use of the advance guard, and how, therefore, it missed any great opportunities and, at the same time, continually exposed itself to risk. Secondly, he desires to insist upon the fact that the lack of initiative and the proper comprehension of war on the French side missed all the opportunities thus afforded, and led necessarily, in spite of Moltke's defect, to disaster.—*Translator.*

far from all contact with the adversary, could give no orders, and the situation might have been prolonged indefinitely if the subordinate Chiefs of the 1st Line, using their own initiative, had not themselves determined the directions in which that Higher Command should have fixed them. How much easier would the task have been, or, at any rate, how much fuller the conceptions of a German Army Commander, who, in coming up on the 6th to give battle, should on the 7th have undertaken the necessary reconnaissance and have summoned for this all available cavalry and thrown forward a strong advance guard on to the road from St. Avold to Metz! He would have discovered the situation of his adversary in that direction and pinned him; he would have done the same on the neighbouring roads; and with each successful discovery he would have "framed" the mass of his adversary's forces. But Moltke remained no more than the Chief of Staff to an elderly King: he would not himself intervene in the great decisions of the war. Such a Supreme Command at the head of the German armies could never give to a struggle that continuous and crushing effect which Napoleon gave it.

* * * * *

Alvensleben, the General in command of

the 3rd German Army Corps, having heard during the night of the 8th–9th August from the 6th Division of German cavalry that the French had evacuated St. Avold, decided to take his own corps thither.

As usual, those in the 1st line saw what was going on better than did those behind them. The Commander who occupies that 1st line, especially if he has forces capable of penetrating in some degree the fog with which he is surrounded in those directions which are vital, is soon able to judge his opponent's situation, or, at any rate, to occupy the gaps his opponent leaves and to profit by them.

Moltke, though instructed on the morning of the 9th quite certainly of the situation in the Boulay–Bouzonville region, and begged by Steinmetz to " feel " the enemy's left with infantry and artillery, still kept the 1st Army motionless; and the reason of this was that he was little occupied with his enemy's movements: that which concerned him was getting his own armies into line for the manœuvre on the Moselle which he was preparing. The 2nd Army could only get his last corps up on to the Saar by the 10th, and, preoccupied with this idea, Moltke could see no object in moving, and it would have

been contradictory to this idea for Moltke to have moved his 1st Army on the 9th.[1]

(d) *The March on to the Moselle*

[*German General Headquarters came to Saarbrück on the 9th August and made arrangements to continue the offensive movement in the direction of Moselle, whither it was thought that the enemy (the French) had retired, whereas, as a fact, the enemy had fallen back on Metz.*]

The halt of the German armies on the Saar continued. The movement was not definitely renewed until the 11th. The 1st and 2nd German armies which had crossed the Saar, having been attacked and beaten on the 6th August, were still without movement on the 10th. They devoted all that day to repose or to arranging themselves upon the roads that they were to follow.

Therefore the immediate effect of the German victory at Spicheren, though there

[1] For this passage the reader also requires some amplification. The point is that Moltke, lacking the advance guard, instead of keeping in touch with the French retreat was uniquely preoccupied with an a priori manœuvre of getting all his main troops in line for an action which, he supposed, would take place on the Moselle. Had he possessed or used an advance guard he would have known the direction of the French retirement, which, as a fact, he wholly misconceived.

was added to it another victory at Frœschwiller on the same day, was to check the German masses. They could not sustain and pursue these good results without stopping, taking breath and rearranging themselves. It took them four days. Their system of attack, of which we have already analyzed the military weakness, would seem to be still weaker from the general point of view of the whole nation at war. For, after all, victory is only a means of arriving at the end of war : at the destruction of the organized forces of the adversary, which alone can give one the power of immediately using the moral and material victory given us by victory. To admit a check in time, therefore, is to give the adversary a chance of recovering from the first blows. If we look back upon those first battles of August 1870 we discover that they had indeed thrown the French Command into the most complete disarray, for that Command was quite unequal to the task which it had undertaken; but the French troops were not shaken. Dispersed as they were they could only discover that they had been overborne by a crushing numerical superiority. All they asked was to be allowed to avenge their initial checks. They still felt certain of victory if they could be launched all combined to the attack. To stand fast

upon the Saar, as the Germans did, had not only the effect of saving their adversary from destruction: it also allowed the French Command to pull itself together, to use the strong military feeling of its soldiers, and its considerable material means of action. The French Command might have struck on the 7th, 8th or 9th with the whole French Army of Lorraine against those three German corps blinded and cut off in the country in front of Saarbrück. They might have set the whole campaign on a new footing. They might have put up any plan they chose. They were free to retreat whither they would for the purposes of reorganization, reinforcement and advance; or they could, alternatively, concentrate on any point they might choose in the whole district and thence attack with all their forces any sector they might select on the long line of the invading armies.

Remember how Napoleon "fell like lightning" on a part of the opposing army, overthrew it and then "taking advantage of the disorder which this manœuvre never failed to create with the enemy's forces, attacked in another quarter with the least possible delay." Remember the stages of that rapid, uninterrupted march of 1806: Saalfeld on the 10th October; Jena, Auerstadt on the 14th; Halle on the 17th; the

entry into Berlin on the 25th; Prentzlow on the 28th; Lübeck on the 6th November; from such a series of dates one gets a very different idea of war, and one also gets from it the impression of a more powerful brain, a more energetic will, a more elastic armed force at the service of both, strongly and intimately united. If the Germans were compelled to halt upon the Saar, as history seems to prove, is it not clear evidence of the difficulty the German Higher Command had in re-taking possession of itself and of its army in unforeseen events, the conduct of which had entirely escaped that Command; is it not a proof that the artist was using a tool too heavy for his hand: a tool that slipped from his fingers or dragged him onward by its weight the moment he began to use it, and so disturbed him that he lost sight of his object, which was the destruction of the principal enemy army?

Moltke disposed of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th and 12th Cavalry Divisions and a Division of the Guard—six Divisions all told. What a capacity for discovery had he in hand if he had made of all of these, or even of a part, one body! That he refrained from doing so proves that he did not really *believe information to be indispensable:* that he no more pursued the art of acting in full knowledge

of his circumstance than he did the art of acting in security from an adverse surprise. The idea of strategic security, of obtaining knowledge of one's foe in order to make that knowledge the basis of one's decisions, escaped him; as did also the idea of covering oneself in order to obtain security for later movements. He based his decisions on deductive reasoning, on chances logically established. *He planned, and he even acted upon, a basis of no more than hypothesis.*

He said to himself that after the double check of the 6th August (Frœschwiller and Spicheren) that adversary *ought* if he were acting logically:

(*a*) First to concentrate his forces in Lorraine and retire them beyond the line of the Moselle.

(*b*) To bring up as quickly as possible his forces from Alsace, retiring them with that object through Nancy and joining them up with the forces of Lorraine behind the Moselle.

(*c*) To effect all this rapidly lest his communications with Paris should be cut by the German 3rd Army.

Upon such reasoning the French Army, from Moltke's point of view, *ought* to have been in full retreat on the 9th. It would be

impossible to catch it up before it crossed the Moselle. Hence Moltke's new manœuvre.

His deductions were clearly logical and rational. The way in which he thought his enemy would behave was the way in which his enemy *probably* would behave. It was not the way in which his enemy *did* behave. Here we perceive the character peculiar to the man who works in his study, which was essentially that of the German Staff. He constantly appeals to reason and then bases his projects on rational conjectures and hypotheses, but unfortunately this method did not always square with the reality of things, which reality is often odd and unlikely because it arises from causes which one cannot grasp or even from causes which remain permanently incapable of explanation. Had Moltke been a man of action in a higher degree he would have taken more account of the human factor, with its highly variable effects. He would have tried to have founded his military plans upon some reality which had first been sought and at last possessed.

With that object he would have organized that prime agent of intelligence, the advance guard of all arms; or even that mere mass of cavalry, the necessity of which had struck him in Berlin as early as the 6th of May, but which he could not constitute in the theatre

of war itself because he was not in command of troops, but only a Chief of Staff.

Moltke's way of reasoning, his way of dealing with the unknown, became traditional in the Prussian Army. Von der Goltz has said: "Surely the dispositions which your adversary should reasonably take up are the best foundations upon which we can build our own plans." But the history of Napoleon, the clearest-headed and the most intuitive of military leaders (in 1806), gives one the immediate answer. It denies such a thesis. It shows us the great Captain going forward only when he has a path well lit and therefore sure, and that because he always worked upon the fullest information.

A cavalry screen thrown out along the whole front can grasp the outline of the situation; it cannot grasp the arrangement of troops behind the front, nor their distances from that front. As for the infantry sent forward to support such cavalry, all it can do is to guarantee the cavalry a retirement: it has no other function.

When it is used as an advance guard to attack, and to be attacked they drag in the corps to which they are attached, and these, in turn, drag in more or less the neighbouring columns of troops. It is Spicheren all over again: that is, the very contrary of an action

determined and conducted by an enlightened will.

In this the inferiority of Moltke's system of attack is notorious. He asked of his battle-force every function combined. It had to reconnoitre, to cover itself, to march, to manœuvre and to fight. As any one could see, and as events proved, no one of these acts could be fully carried out. Reconnaissance was only made at short range; of protection there was none; marching was slow; concentration was never complete. When the battle came nearly half the troops were missing; even on the 18th August the whole of the 3rd German Army was absent and the 4th Corps of the 2nd.

This marching disposition, imperfect of itself, became still more imperfect through the direction given to the advance. That direction was not aimed at the mass of the adversary, intact though that mass still was. If we consider the three zones of action adopted by Moltke in its defence we shall see that the centre of the German forces was directed on to the region just on the south of Pont-à-Mousson. The manœuvre was firmly based upon Pont-à-Mousson and remained so quite independently of what the position on the Moselle might be. This disposition had been given its different direction once and

for all, and being highly rigid by the very nature of its organization could only march on the Moselle with its centre aiming at the district of Pont-à-Mousson and Dieulouard. Yet even theoretically the mass of the enemy was not in this district, and the whole value of the advance turned upon the condition that the adversary, who could be neither sought, nor pinned down, nor even observed, should remain absolutely inactive.

Lacking its own organ of information, the German General Headquarters was the last to be informed of the position and movements of the enemy.

This kind of war eliminates the idea of an active enemy who may appear at any moment and attack. It is based on the idea of going forward without seeking one's opponent, without standing on guard against him, at least until the moment when the work really opens and when one finds oneself before the position where one supposes the adversary to be. It is a strategy terribly at ease with itself, and the weakness of such conception appears even in the presence of such a Higher Command as was the French Higher Command of 1870.

(e) *The Surprise on the River Nied*

During the 10th of August the squadrons

which were reconnoitring for the right wing and centre of the 2nd German Army had re-established contact with the French Army, and by evening had reached the river called the "French" Nied. This cavalry there discovered a line strongly held, and they saw behind it important enemy masses in good positions. It observed the enemy's bivouacs, camps and posts, and the columns on the march from Metz towards Courcelles, Pange and Mont. Here we have a clear case of strategic surprise. Great enemy masses have been suddenly discovered, there is no chance of holding them before the 14th, and as yet we are but on the eve of the 11th.

If it be necessary to attack, attack will be impossible before the 16th or 17th.

The 3rd German Army had no choice but to fight where it stood, with no chance of success. It was compelled to form the pivot of the German conversion, and that for several days. The situation of the general advance corps would have been very different from that of this cavalry, thus dragging in the 3rd Corps. It would have had plenty of space behind it, it could have manœuvred the retreat without fear of destruction and at the same time it would have covered and made secure the German concentration and the manœuvre that was projected. Here we

find, for the first time, the weakening effect of this marching, happy-go-lucky, towards the Moselle : the weakening effect of that easy strategy which, since it principally derives from logical reasoning exclusive of information upon realities, is wholly abandoned to abstract conclusions.

The enemy (the French in this case) had been left free in his movements, and could, whenever he chose, make the German conversion towards the Nied useless. Nevertheless the German General Headquarters stuck to the plan of that conversion and only modified it in its execution by making the troops on the left wing march in echelons so as to give them power to take up as quickly as possible the direction at Pont-à-Mousson. As a fact this position was to lead them a little later on to the line of Faulquemont-Verney. For this modification was but a half measure derived from the fact that the Command did not know how it was to act in the long run, and that half measure weakened the final action. The total of the forces available could only arrive at the desired point later, and from this erroneous idea more than one crisis arose.

As early as the 11th of August a piece of reconnaissance carried out by an officer of the 1st Army which reached Pontigny at

2.15 in the afternoon gave information that the banks of the River Nied had been evacuated by the French between Pontigny and Northen. The heights behind this line were no longer occupied; a camp established at Northen the day before and estimated at 50,000 men had disappeared. This information reached German Headquarters by telegram at quarter-past nine in the evening of the same day. At the very moment, therefore, when Moltke had given his order for concentration in front of the River Nied the situation turned out to be changed, and the order no longer corresponded to that situation.

On that same day, 11th August, another reconnaissance thrown out by the 3rd German Cavalry Division remarked as early as five o'clock in the morning that a camp of about 40,000 men in the region of the Ponds was striking its tents. "From the west of the French Nied the roads leading from St. Avold and from Boulay to Metz were covered with deep columns of all arms going towards that fortress. The reconnaissance followed them up beyond the Ponds and at half-past eleven in the morning it saw the enemy rear guard halt at Bellecroix, the fork of the two roads. Other information came in confirming this."

On the morrow, the 12th August, the German reconnaissance passed Bellecroix and caught sight of numerous French encampments which seemed to stretch up to the very walls of Metz.

Important groups of French troops were also seen to the west of Puche (the 1st Division of Cavalry), to the west of Laquenexy and of Coincy (6th Division), and in the neighbourhood of Grigy and Borny (6th Division).

In front of the German left wing reconnaissance parties gave information that the countryside was clear between Moyenvic and Nancy. Nancy, Dieulouard and Pont-à-Mousson were not occupied by the French. It was the same thing on the right wing between the Nied and the Moselle. The weakness of Moltke's disposition of troops which we have already seen in the march on the Saar and then in the march on the Moselle occurred again when he had to cross that river in the presence of his adversary; for it was a system which attempted to do everything at once, both to act and to cover, and it showed itself powerless to fulfil these two tasks. Being faced with the chance of reaching the left bank of the Moselle and of holding up the enemy on the right bank the German Command tried to take both objectives at the same time and ended in a forma-

tion in two masses separated by the obstacle of the river, let alone by the distance between them. The consequence was, as at Rohrbach, an extreme dispersion of troops. After having guaranteed themselves in a certain measure from the most immediate danger, which was that of the right bank, their disposition gave rise to another peril equally great upon the left bank, and they had not the power to bring up succour.

(f) *The Battle of Borny* (*14th August*)

Steinmetz, since he left his subordinate Commanders in such ignorance of his plans, might at least have nourished a desire to command fully on his own account; but he did not do so. He kept his headquarters at Varize, nearly twelve miles from the 7th Corps, and never left them. He seemed no keener on leading his army than on informing it.

[*Bazaine, having been given the command of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th French Corps and of the Guard, decided to abandon the Nied and to fall back on Verdun. The crossing of the Moselle was a longer operation than he allowed for. On the 14th August the 26th German Brigade, under General von der Goltz, which formed the advance guard of the 7th German*

Corps, attacked those French forces which had not yet crossed the river (the 3rd Corps, the Guard and a division of the 4th Corps) at Borny.]

General von der Goltz, with the 7th Corps, was in command of its advance guard at Laquenexy. He there received, during all the morning of the 14th August, information which indicated that the French were retreating towards Metz. At one o'clock in the afternoon a Reserve officer reached him with the message that the 1st German Corps was about to attack. The General, therefore, began to take stock of his attitude, and, bit by bit, came to a decision. In spite of the storm which it would certainly raise against himself on the part of the Army Commander (Steinmetz), under whom he had recently directly served and whose hasty character he knew, he prepared to attack. At a quarter to two he communicated his decision to his Army Corps Commander, General Zastrow. Then, as information kept flowing in and confirming the French retreat, he gave the order to attack at three o'clock in the afternoon.

The decision so taken was at once communicated to the Commanders of the 13th and 14th Divisions, to the Commander of the 1st Army Corps, and to the Commander of the 1st Division of Cavalry.

The 1st German Army Corps had not received its instructions from Steinmetz, any more than had the 7th; but Lieut.-Col. Brandenstein from General Headquarters had given the 1st Corps an idea of the general situation.

At half-past three General von der Goltz had concentrated his advance guard at Laquenexy and had begun his movement. He was master of the Château of Aubigny, of part of Colombey and of the heights to the south of that village. These points he held with three battalions. He soon found himself threatened by the Saarbrück road towards Montoy. He engaged two further battalions in that direction and managed to occupy La Planchette. His two batteries had taken up their positions to the south-west of Coincy. It was by this time past five o'clock. The enemy (the French) opened the attack (by which they proposed to turn and dislodge the weak Prussian advance guards) with a heavy fire. This new phase of the action was not without peril for the Germans, but just at that moment reinforcements appeared upon their side. The second half of the 30th Division came up from the east to the aid of its advance guard, which was being severely pressed, while, towards the north, the 1st Corps answered von der

Goltz's call at top speed and was already engaged.

The advance guard of the two divisions of the 1st German Corps appeared, the first by the Saarbrück road, the second by the Saarlouis road, and they came up nearly simultaneously. First, they brought their artillery into play—that of the 1st Division to the south-west of Montoy, that of the 2nd to the south of the Noisseville brewery; while their infantry tried to force its way southward—the 1st Division by Montoy and La Planchette towards Nauvillier, the 2nd Division round Noisseville towards Nouilly.

About six o'clock in the evening the greater part of the infantry of all three German advance guards (*i. e.* the advance guard of the 13th, the 1st, and the 2nd Divisions) was engaged in a very uncertain action, which, happily for the Germans, became stronger as the artillery line, composed at first of no more than the batteries of their advance guard, was reinforced every moment by the batteries of the mass of the army. By six o'clock in the evening no less than sixty Prussian pieces were in action.

By a quarter-past five General Zastrow took over the direction of the action. He had been informed at four o'clock of the decision which had been taken by the Commander of

his advance guard, and a quarter of an hour later he heard that action was in progress. He immediately retired to the heights of Colombey. He could not approve the initiative taken by his subordinate, for it was contrary to the instructions which the Commander of the army had given, but he understood that the affair had become serious, that it was no longer possible to break it off, and he therefore took direction of the battle from the left wing of the line.

Towards seven o'clock Zastrow received an order from Steinmetz, which order was brought by an artillery officer who had left Varize at 5.30. It ran thus: "The battle must be broken off and the troops must return to the positions occupied earlier in the day." Zastrow replied that the action was too far advanced for such a thing to be possible: "In the present situation it is impossible to break away without exposing ourselves to the most cruel losses. Your order shall be obeyed as soon as the thing shall become at all possible, especially after the evacuation of the wounded." But when night had fallen Zastrow ordered the conquered positions to be occupied in order to confirm his victory.

General Manteuffel, commanding the 1st Corps, received the same order from Stein-

metz just as the action was drawing to a close, and he gave identically the same answer as Zastrow had given : " We have thrown the enemy back. Short of a directly contrary order I shall continue to hold the ground now conquered in order to evacuate my wounded and to confirm the victory."

As for the Commander of the 8th Corps (who was placed in reserve of the 1st Army), since, like all the rest, he knew nothing of his Chief, Steinmetz', intention and had heard nothing, he asked Headquarters at Varize (towards four o'clock) whether he ought to advance, and, if so, in what direction. Steinmetz replied, with exasperation, that he must wait for orders; and the Commander of the 8th Corps, although his Generals of Division, and Manteuffel from the 1st Corps, begged him to go forward, refused to move on account of Steinmetz' prohibition. About half-past eight o'clock in the evening he received an order from Steinmetz to move the 32nd Brigade to the Ponds and the army corps as a whole to Varize. He replied that on account of the lateness of the hour the movement could not be immediately executed, but it should be undertaken on the morrow at the earliest moment.

To sum up : Of *three* Commanders of army corps, *two* had received the order to break off

the battle, and the *third* had received the order to go forward and support the troops engaged in the battle!

No one of the three had obeyed orders, and Steinmetz flew into the most violent passion. He went himself to Manteuffel. The meeting took place at a quarter-past nine in the evening near the Amitié Farm, not far from Noisseville. It was extremely violent. Steinmetz reproached Manteuffel with having given battle against his orders, with having suffered defeat, and with being the cause of the considerable losses which had been sustained. The two men stood facing each other at the entry to the burning village, the one in a passion, carried away, and quite forgetting his duties as a Chief; the other in a calm, respectful attitude. As they so stood the band of a regiment passed by playing a victorious march.

With men like Steinmetz weak characters lose all confidence in themselves, strong characters resist. Manteuffel said what he had to say with all possible courtesy; he pointed out that there were circumstances in which a General could only depend upon his own judgment and must act upon his own responsibility even if he had to act against orders received. He said that such a case had presented itself during that day. He

asked that bivouacs might be placed upon the conquered positions in order to confirm the victory that had been won. Steinmetz, however, kept to his original decision of retiring the army corps. He again reproached Manteuffel with lack of discipline, and gave him one hour only in which to get his troops into some sort of order, pick up his wounded, and retire. At eleven o'clock the 1st Corps retreated.

Zastrow did not see Steinmetz that night. After he received the order mentioned above and had told his troops to bivouac on the field of action he was joined (at a quarter to eleven at night, as he sat at dinner with his Chief of Staff in the Château of Penge) by Steinmetz' orderly officer, who had brought him the order to retreat. Luckily he had at his side Lieut.-Col. Brandenstein of General Headquarters, who during all the early part of the day had urged the reconnaissance, and later had called vigorously for action.

Strong in the support which Brandenstein gave him, Zastrow sent back word to Steinmetz that his (Zastrow's) orders for the night to his troops had already been delivered, and that the retreat, which it would be very difficult to undertake at that moment, should be taken in hand as early as possible the next day.

Lieut.-Col. Brandenstein left Penge at once, and at three o'clock in the morning of the 15th he had got back to General Headquarters at Herny, which he had left for twenty-four hours. All that space of time had been given up to inspiring and supporting the decisions of the Troop Commanders on the front line. He immediately explained to Moltke what had taken place, and Moltke, conforming himself as usual to events, sent at five o'clock in the morning this telegram to the 1st Army : " The 1st Army will occupy the ground it has conquered."

Steinmetz yielded and betook himself to the ground in question.

The King was already on the spot. He received Steinmetz on the heights of Flanville ; then he sent for Manteuffel and Zastrow and thanked them for having undertaken the battle. Turning particularly to Zastrow and holding out his hand he said : " I thank you above all for having kept your army corps upon the conquered positions."

Then, after a moment of silence, the King added : " Goltz is a lucky man. This is the second time that he has shown initiative and resolution."

Here we see what character a really strong Command should bear. It should be careful, when it has once chosen and instructed its

agents, to trust to their initiative and to leave them to take the very gravest decisions, even though those decisions be sometimes contrary to orders actually given. It should trust them to fill upon the spot those gaps which the strategy of the study is bound to leave, because such strategy cannot have its eyes everywhere.

Brigadier-General von der Goltz, after warning the neighbouring troops, launched off into the fight with his one brigade, and this it was which saved the strategical manœuvre of Moltke. Since an unexpected attack is imposed by equally unexpected circumstances, and since the tactical result may be compromised by troops acting spontaneously and without plan, we must prepare for such circumstances a special force which should be capable by its organization and by its range of manœuvre to act without involving the mass of the army. Such a force is the strategic advance guard. But let the Higher Command keep in proximity to that advance guard and in touch with it; that is the point from which he can best seize his adversary's situation and the attitude of the enemy, and that is the point where he can design the conduct to be followed by his own troops with the greatest judgment. That is also the point where he can make his

own thought best understood and give it his greatest value. It is there alone that he can guarantee the rational development of the manœuvre he has undertaken.

We have seen how the absence of this direction by the Higher Command caused one of the chief inconveniences in the improvised attack of von der Goltz, which inconvenience was the obvious disarray in the Command of the 1st Army on the night on the 14th. Von der Goltz, in trying to fill the gap which Moltke had left in his strategy, the Commanders of army corps in trying to help von der Goltz in this task which was beyond his own strength, escaped wholly from the authority of the army Commander, who was, so to speak, partially blind of his own will to begin with, and later entirely so. Finally, we have seen that nothing less than the direct intervention of a particular organ—to wit, the Prussian Grand General Staff, directly supported by the Royal Power—was necessary to put things right again. But such a method of going to work is to follow the perilous road of reaching order by way of anarchy.

(g) *The Battle of Gravelotte* (16*th August*)

[*Bazaine, marching on Verdun, had to halt at the cross-roads of Gravelotte, a point which*

had got congested, and his army corps bivouacked along the road from Rezonville to Metz. The 1st and 2nd German Armies crossed the Moselle at Pont-à-Mousson, Dieulouard and Malbach. They left Metz and the French to the north and launched off in pursuit of an enemy which Moltke imagined to be upon the Meuse. A cavalry reconnaissance sent by chance towards the north discovered the bivouacs of the army of Metz, and the German Corps immediately gave battle. But even by the end of the day these corps could only put in line, after a most violent action, 90,000 men against 135,000 of the French. The Germans were thrown back. But Bazaine, instead of following up the offensive, fell back upon Metz.]

The whole of the 2nd German Army, with its cavalry division, its regular army corps organization, and even its rear service, was hurried forward to the Meuse, the crossing of which Moltke was determined to secure.

On the morning of the 16th, the various fractions of the German army started without the above-mentioned decisions having been altered, without anybody, as we have seen, attempting to verify the accuracy of the initial assumption; besides, until 1 p.m., nothing in the reports received by the 3rd Corps had appeared to Prince Frederick

Charles to be of such a nature as to induce him to alter in any way the measures he had adopted. The true situation was only known at that moment at the headquarters of the 2nd Army. It would have been known earlier if it had only been sought for, as is clearly shown by the facts now known.

But the certainty and quietude which occupied Prince Frederick Charles's mind were not shared by all his subordinates :

" Infantry General von Voigts-Rhetz (commanding the 10th Corps), feeling some anxiety on account of those French bivouacs, the existence of which had been reported on the preceding day, thought it necessary to combine, with the movement of his army corps on Saint-Hilaire, *a strong reconnaissance* on the camps observed in the evening of the 15th in the neighbourhood of Rezonville. He had attached to that operation the 5th Cavalry Division under General von Rheinbaben, which he also reinforced, very early on the 16th, with two horse batteries from the corps artillery brought from Thiaucourt to Xonville by the Chief of Staff of the 10th Army Corps, Lieut.-Col. von Caprivi, under escort of the 2nd squadron of the 2nd Regiment of Dragoon Guards. In order to support this reconnaissance, the order was also

given to half the 37th Infantry Brigade which was at Thiaucourt to join, at Chambley, the detachment of Colonel von Lynker, sent out from Novéant in the Moselle valley. General von Voigts-Rhetz intended to march, meanwhile, from Thiaucourt on Saint-Hilaire, with the remainder of the 15th Division. . . ."

Here is a highly practical lesson. People in high quarters believed they could do without security; the performers in the front rank reinstate security. They do not advance blindfold in the midst of danger. It was merely human; such a game would have proved too risky for them. However, they reinstated security imperfectly and too late to undo the harm that had been done. Practice as well as theory show, then, that the best way is to attend to security before doing anything else, and to form an advance guard.

* * * * *

The 3rd Corps had marched into an ant-hill. The French army, instead of being in full retreat towards the Meuse, was completing the evacuation of Metz; its *moral* was excellent, having been even enhanced by the fight on the 14th. It was assembled between the two roads to Conflans and Mars-la-Tour, four miles from Gorze. The 3rd Corps came up and struck full against that assembly. Under what conditions will the

2nd German Army meet the main and yet unbeaten forces of the adversary?

At 11 a.m., when the battle was in full swing, all the various army corps, other than the 3rd, were on their way to reach the cantonment assigned to each: the 10th was marching by the road to Thiaucourt, Saint Benoît, and Maizeray, at an average distance of 10½ miles from Vionville; the Guard, at a double distance, about 24 miles; the 4th at a triple distance, 33 miles; the 12th, 9th and 2nd, in second line, were more than a day's march to the rear.

Under those conditions, the 2nd Army could only oppose to the French forces debouching from Metz, on the 16th, one full army corps, the 3rd and the greater part of the 10th, on the 17th, three or four army corps.

It had to wait until the 18th to assemble the largest part of its forces.

We have here, then, a strategical surprise in the fullest sense of the word. In the presence of an enemy who should have been an active and able tactician, or even in the presence of a Commander who had the *object of war* in mind, it would have become impossible for the 2nd Army to assemble on the 16th or even on the 17th, for assembly would have meant disaster; it would have

become impossible for the two other armies to lend that 2nd Army any efficient help: else, what would have become of their own situation?

* * * * *

Following the order given on the 16th of August, 1870, at midday, the 2nd German Army was dispersed on the 17th over a front and depth each of some twenty-five miles. On the 18th it was to be still more dispersed, reconnoitring towards the Meuse. Three army corps were to march to the north-west and the rest of the army (four corps) to go westward, *i. e.* to turn its back on what had been seen of the enemy.

Everything developed according to plan. Everything was envisaged except battle. It was a fashion of conducting war which eliminated all consideration of the enemy: the enemy was regarded as a negligible quantity. This enemy was to be thrown back upon Thionville or upon the Belgian frontier by the three army corps that were marching northward, while the other four were to go forward at their ease towards the Meuse in order to seize the crossings of that river. One of them, even, the 4th Army Corps, had a special objective given to it; the Fortress of Toun.

When actual battle unexpectedly took the

place of this imaginary pursuit which had been planned in the blindness of the Higher Command, Alvensleben, like Frederick Charles a little later, had no choice but to accept that battle and solve the problem as best he could. In that very hard task both men showed themselves to be models which we can admire without reserve. They resolutely took the offensive and kept it up till the end of the day with the object of acquiring and maintaining over their adversary, in spite of every difficulty, that moral ascendancy which is the true stuff of victory.

The German troops were found to have lost in the course of the battle, when it was over, 15,000 men and more than 700 officers, and this out of only *two* army corps. The French, out of no less than *five* army corps, had only lost 16,000 men and rather more than 800 officers.

Such was the price which the German Higher Command, having the sense of war, and with their judgment informed by the sight of the battlefield, were willing to pay in order to repair the errors and mechanical blindness of work elaborated in the study. And once again tactics turned the tables and redeemed the disasters of strategy: the soldier saved the Higher Command.

* * * * *

The dispositions of the Prince had been brought up during the night at Gorze and had been happily expanded and completed by his subordinates, and were in process of execution in the first hours of the morning of August 17th. And there we see that unity of doctrine, still more that unity of feeling, which between them create victory. But can one admit that the conditions corresponded completely to the needs which the situation had admittedly produced, or to the dangers which might well be expected, or to the results which were aimed at?

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In these orders may clearly be perceived the mind of Moltke, as also the manœuvre which he thought he could realize. In his view, as in that of Prince Frederick Charles, the French were in retreat, and in retreat towards the north.

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Let us remember Napoleon's quotation on the necessity for an army's always being in a position to put forth the whole resistance of which it is capable; on the necessity, for a General, of never basing his decisions on anything but reports which are certain and true at the moment when those decisions are to be carried out.

Whenever men like von Moltke and Prince

Frederick Charles are seen to err, people are inclined to think that the problem outreaches the limits of human perception; they feel inclined to charge with foolish conceit any one attempting to be more clearsighted or more farsighted. Theory, at any rate, is tempted to such a conclusion. But is it not the chief characteristic of study that it attempts to discover the means of reducing the chances of committing those errors of which human nature is always capable, or of lessening the consequences of such errors once they are made; of removing the limits of the unknown, of bringing the mind from ignorance to knowledge, so as to make our intelligence more *efficient?* Is it not characteristic of science that it should, by means of a series of discoveries, place within reach of average men the possibility of doing better than did the superior men of the past, by teaching them processes which genius has discovered?

It is in a slowly progressive manner that truth is mastered.

(h) *The Battle of St. Privat* (18*th August*)

[*After Resonville, Moltke thought that the French were in retreat towards the north. In reality they had retired upon Metz, and had taken up a position facing west. The two*

German armies were sent towards the north, marching by echelons of army corps, the left forward. Therefore, when the enemy was at last discovered, the German army corps had to execute a conversion by the right in order to come into the battle. There was even a plan of attack in such a fashion as to turn the French Right, which Moltke thought to be at Amanvillers, then at St. Privat, while it was, as a fact, at Roncourt, still further to the north.]

Moltke, it has been said, ordered a reconnaissance, and there is quoted as proof his order of the 17th. It was indeed judged by him that the enemy's positions should be reconnoitred and the results communicated to Flavigny, where General Headquarters designed to be early upon the 18th, in order to pick up the information which would be necessary to the direction of the action; but such a proceeding was hardly an order necessitating certain execution. The vague expression of need is a very different thing from command. Apart from the necessary feebleness which accompanies age, we are bound to admit in the German Command a weakness of *strategic doctrine;* for that Command proposed to solve the unknown (which is inherent in war) by mere logic. The result was that on the 18th it stumbled from one

surprise into another. It lost from the very beginning of the day all power of direct action. The result is easy to foresee, and the sequel will show from what source victory did as a fact arise. For, I repeat, the Germans had to do with an adversary condemned by his chiefs to a complete immobility, to a mere defensive attitude, and to being riveted to the Fortress of Metz.

While General Headquarters were getting to Pont-à-Mousson, Steinmetz had come to the south of Gravelotte and had observed the enemy's positions in the neighbourhood of the points called Point-du-Jour and Moscow. He noted a great animation among them, and he had seen the adversary making field defences. He had concluded that the French neither meant to march northward nor to attack, but simply to resist on the spot. Moreover, the enemy masses which could thus be seen were a real peril on account of their proximity to the 7th German Corps, which the 1st German Army could not support on account of the nature of the ground. We see, then, that Steinmetz had the best appreciation of the enemy's position. But as he kept entirely apart from the meeting at Flavigny his observations remained without profit.

Towards four o'clock, as he reached Ars,

his headquarters, he received the order from Moltke dated two o'clock.[1] He fell into a violent passion, said that this way of going to work, giving orders to his army corps over his head, was lacking in decency, and that there was no reason left for his occupying his command at all. What had happened was that the authorities had kept the 1st Corps on the right bank of the Moselle out of his sphere of action and withdrawn the 8th Corps, and left him commanding but the 7th Corps. Two Generals—its own Commander and Steinmetz himself—were more than was necessary (he said) to command this single army corps. Steinmetz belonged to that category of officers who think they own their troops, and if he saw the greater part of his Command withdrawn from him his bitterness soon led to personal attacks.

To pass from this : shortly after six o'clock in the evening he communicated to his army the order which he had received, and particularly gave directions to the 7th Corps to occupy on the morrow from five o'clock in the morning, and to hold at all costs, the northern fringe of the wood of Vaux, and that fringe of the wood of Ognons which looks towards

[1] It was an order commanding the movements of two-thirds of Steinmetz' army of three corps, without consulting him.

Gravelotte, so that the corps would be drawn up facing north and east.

Steinmetz next gave General Headquarters an account of the orders he had delivered, and also communicated his observations on the attitude of the French. He seems in the same dispatch to have asked for the 8th Corps to be given back to him, or, at any rate, to have asked to have it moved more towards the east.

This communication reached Pont-à-Mousson in the night. Moltke was asleep and he was not wakened.

[*Steinmetz then occupied the region of Ars with the 7th German Corps, instead of sending that corps towards Gravelotte as the orders of Moltke had directed.*]

Steinmetz turned his back on the objective, and refused the means indicated by Moltke. He allowed himself to be hypnotized by the task of occupying Ars, and thus aggravated the already doubtful position of his army.

The insufficient foresight shown, on the German side, must be counted, from the 17th of August onward, to the debit of this easily-angered character: only thus can we explain his strange conduct during the battle of the morrow.

* * * * *

[*What follows concerns the action of the 18th August.*]

The German General Headquarters arrived at six o'clock in the morning on the heights to the south of Flavigny.

The only news it got was that the preceding night had been calm upon the front of both armies. It showed a certain irritated surprise at not having later information than that dated two o'clock in the afternoon on the day before. It is true that it had asked for nothing and ordered nothing. It had not even indicated in what direction reconnaissance might be of service. A Higher Command really anxious to act with a knowledge, above all things, of the general situation, would have gone at a gallop from Vionville to the Etain Road, taken in hand the system of discovery, sent forward a mass of squadrons with batteries accompanying them in the direction where novel interest had arisen—that of St. Privat—and supported that cavalry and those guns with an advance guard of infantry and artillery capable both of maintaining and continuing the reconnaissance, or, alternatively, of receiving the squadrons and protecting them should they have to retreat. In the light of what such a Command would thus have discovered—what

would have been in a sense under their very eyes—there would have been time to continue the manœuvre of the army.

* * * * *

Prince Frederick Charles determined to take action. He was aware of important French forces to the west of Metz. Cavalry patrols sent forward from the 9th German Corps had found nothing towards the north-east. Therefore the French positions could not expand beyond La Folie; he determined to attack in that direction with such forces as might be necessary to carry the position.

Thus, while General Headquarters turned its gaze towards the Briey Road, and while the 1st Army remained motionless on the Plateau of Gravelotte, Prince Frederick Charles, at Vionville, alone took the resolution of acting towards the east with part of his army. Is not the anarchy in this way of conducting the war by the German Higher Command striking? Does it not suggest the question, "Who was really in command?"

Yet (a singular thing) this movement ordered by Prince Frederick Charles became the enveloping attack, the decisive action, of a battle which was as yet neither engaged nor even planned.

It was evidently a very sound idea to engage in the direction of La Folie, for that would

get the German Command out of the condition of the "unknown" in which it still remained. It was also sound to demand this effort of the 9th German Corps, for that was the corps nearest to the objective. But the movement ought to have been ordered as a mere reconnaissance, because as yet nothing was known: and it ought to have been kept strictly to that rôle:

I. It was only at half-past ten in the morning of this day, the 18th August, that German General Headquarters began to see things as they were: the French army to the west of Metz (where it had been, as a fact, for several days, and the Germans had been moving up and down the whole morning of the 18th in front of it!). Moltke did not even yet know whether the French army was on the march or stationary. Might it not be in retreat upon Briey?

II. Anyhow, without any further certain information, he put the right of his troops in position at Montigny-la-Grange. This was to turn out an error and a false direction.

III. In this doubt of his (which later was to be solved by his subordinates) he

planned a manœuvre with a double alternative objective; it was aimed to act (*a*) upon the enemy in retreat, or, alternatively, (*b*) against the enemy in position.

IV. But this manœuvre would have two totally different values, according to whether the one or other of these hypotheses should turn out to be that with which he had to deal. For if there were no retreat going on the two armies would come to the shock on the enemy's positions. Whereas if a French retreat was in progress (on which point Moltke was still without news), no attack could be delivered save with two German corps, the Guard and the 12th, which alone could take the offensive through the district of St. Marie. For the other corps had each already received their objectives elsewhere. Therefore we have here a notorious divergence of effort, with all the weakness that might result from it, at the decisive point.

And what would happen to Moltke's manœuvre if in place of the two hypotheses which he allowed for, a third should turn out to be the

reality? We see here once more the perils and the incertitude of a military combination which lacks the solid base of serious reconnaissance, and particularly of reconnaissance in the useful direction—that whence danger threatens. It is an excellent example of how powerless one is to prepare a battering blow in a direction on which one is not thoroughly instructed.

V. But let us admit that the manœuvre would result in an attack on the enemy's positions. There are still 8000 yards of marching for the Guard before it can attack, and nearly 12,000 for the 12th German Corps. In other words, three hours must pass before contact with the enemy will take place; therefore one is supposing the enemy to be motionless, for one is leaving him free to move if he chooses. Indeed, if the enemy were to move in one direction or another every element in the manœuvre would at once be called into question.

VI. Further, who shall give the signal for this attack, which it is desired, of course, to deliver simultaneously?

There would be necessary, in order to arrive at such synchrony, a Commander who could watch the masses of his troops arriving and taking their distances at a good useful parallel from the enemy's positions. But no one (so far) knew how far those enemy positions extended! There was nothing but guesswork on this point. Again, for such a purpose one would require a Commander who should march with the most distant troops (the 12th and the Guard), troops which were asked to solve, even as they marched, the doubtful question of whether the French were retiring on Briey. That Commander, again, must arrive at a just decision according to circumstances, and come to such a decision as he accompanied the forces. But Moltke remained at Flavigny. Given that, one can foresee how, in spite of the way in which the French played into the hands of the Germans, the programme elaborated by the German Headquarters did not come off. Above all, there was no synchrony. The victory which was gained

> reposed entirely upon the intelligent initiative of the subordinate Commands, not upon an enlightened and effective Higher Command. That Higher Command remained throughout incapable of fulfilling its task.

Towards noon the German Higher Command (which had put its army in movement from five o'clock in the morning and had yet only gained some 8000 to 10,000 yards of ground) had abandoned, without thorough examination, its theory that the French were in retreat towards Briey, and had admitted the establishment of the French on the west of Metz from Point-du-Jours up to Montigny-la-Grange. The taking up of the new direction had been a long business, though it was effected in the presence of an enemy who did not move and who was badly protected; but long as it was it remained incomplete. However, as German Headquarters thought they were quite certain of the position of the French Right, as the 2nd German Army was equally certain, the decision was taken to throw what was supposed to be a defeated army back into Metz.

Even as Prince Frederick Charles was giving his last orders the cannon was heard just after midday towards Vernéville. But

before the Commander-in-Chief had given any new orders, the troops on the left of the 2nd Army had further probed the situation and on their own initiative had taken their dispositions, corresponding to the new state of affairs. Thus the Guard let it be known as early as 11.30 that St. Marie-aux-Chênes was occupied by French infantry and that there were many French troops at St. Privat. The Guard also let it be known that on account of these circumstances and of the instructions received it would march not on Vernéville but on Habonville.

The 12th Corps sent information at 11.45 that the enemy was in position at Moineville and St. Marie-aux-Chênes; consequently, that this army corps was about to march against these two places, covering itself by a flank guard towards Valleroy.

The manœuvre continued, therefore, to prolong itself both in time and in space. The combined action of the two corps, the Guard and the 12th, was still awaited. Because they had not reconnoitred the positions which they desired to attack, the Germans passed from one surprise to another.

It was imperative for the Germans that they should win this action of the 18th because, if they did not, all their plans would be upset. Therefore it was determined to

attack St. Privat immediately, and with the Guard alone, because it was impossible to count upon the arrival of the 12th Corps, either in time to be of use or in the required direction. Such was the end of Prince Frederick Charles' original plan: the plan of attacking with the 9th Corps. He had to give it up. Moreover, as the plan which he next adopted (attack by the Guard) led to a check, there was neither a victory of the 2nd Army to be put to the credit of its General, nor a victory of the armies as a whole to be put to the credit of Moltke. To the one as to the other insufficiency of reconnaissance had forbidden a sufficient power of direction to develop the projected combination.

* * * * *

At from 600 to 800 paces behind the advanced ridge which covers St. Privat the Guard halted in a condition of complete exhaustion. Of 11,600 men which had engaged in the action, hardly 4,600 were left fit to maintain the struggle. The proportion of officer losses was even heavier than this; in certain battalions not an officer was left. The Prussian Guard was at the mercy of any counter-offensive the French might choose to make. But none was made.

* * * * *

The capture of St. Privat at eight o'clock

in the evening decided the defeat of the French right wing. But it was only the arrival of the 12th Corps after it had marched all day *under the direct and personal instructions of its own Commander, the Prince Royal of Saxony,* which permitted this result to be obtained.

It was the initiative of the Corps Commander of the 12th which assured the decision of St. Privat in time. At every other point the German efforts had remained impotent; and it is he whom we ought to recognize as the true victor of that day, or, at least, as the true author of the 2nd German army's success.

* * * * *

Steinmetz and Zastrow thought, still earlier in the day, that the enemy was in retreat and even in rout! At three o'clock in the afternoon the Commander of the 1st Army (Steinmetz) had sent this order to the 1st Division of Cavalry grouped to the west of Malmaison: "The 1st Division will immediately go forward and cross the depression of Gravelotte." At the same time he ordered the 7th Corps to go forward with its infantry.

* * * * *

The advanced infantry, sent by the 8th Corps (the 31st Brigade) and by the 7th Corps (the 27th Brigade) to reinforce the

cavalry, found shelter in the woods of the ravine of the Mance at the moment when this 1st Cavalry Division met with its disaster. Nevertheless, its entry into the line was thereby delayed.

The check was complete; first, from the point of view of *moral*, through the profound impression which the disaster produced; next, from the point of view of material, for two batteries had been destroyed by the French fire and a third had been lost in the ravine. Three others were wandering about without the power to engage. The artillery of the 7th Corps was reduced to thirty-six pieces. The situation would have become very critical for the 8th Corps if the enemy had only taken advantage of that moment.

To sum up: On the right German wing, to which General Headquarters had particularly attached itself, the battle was lost, and lost under conditions which forbade its renewal on the 19th. The last available corps, the 2nd, had come up in the night, lost its direction, and bunched confusedly at a range of no more than 200 to 300 yards from the enemy.

The last information from the 2nd Army was as early as four o'clock in the afternoon, and at that moment nothing decisive had occurred.

One understands well enough, therefore, why Moltke came back to Rezonville towards eleven o'clock that night, "sombre and taciturn." The physical fatigue he suffered—he had been going from four o'clock in the morning to five in the afternoon of the 17th, and, on this day of the 18th, from three o'clock in the morning to that night—was the least cause of his mood. Beyond that there was the very bad impression which he had gathered of the fight in the ravine of the Mance. He had left the field of battle with regret. He had certainly gathered no laurels and he had no reserves with which to begin the struggle again upon the following day.

Doubtless at this moment he thought with bitterness of the 4th Corps which he had sent off against Toul and Commercy, and of the 3rd Army halted near Nancy. Either the one or the other, had he but had the foresight to retain them, would now have proved a precious auxiliary to the solution of his problem.

Nevertheless, he awaited the dispatches of Prince Frederick Charles, and, though he was in perplexity, kept the calm which he always showed in great circumstances. He was even able to take his regular sleep, which was a proof of the balance of his nerves as

well as of his strength of character. After midnight there came news of the victory of Frederick Charles. He received that news with apparent indifference and as though he had never doubted its arrival.

* * * * *

Moltke was but a Chief of Staff. The General Headquarters of the German Army in 1870 could not, on account of its composition—that is, on account of the age and the character of its principal personalities—hope to drive the war at the pace it should have had.

In the absence of an effective superior Command, there were two battles upon this 18th of August: that of St. Privat which was a victory and one in which Moltke was not present, but in which his ideas were followed; another at Gravelottes which was a check. There Moltke was present and yet was unable to make his views predominate.

(i) *The Manœuvre of Sedan*

[*The army of Bazaine had been reduced to a stationary condition under Metz after St. Privat. Moltke then invested it with the* 1st *and* 2nd *German Armies, while he formed a* 4th *Army composed of the* 4th *Army Corps, the* 12th *Army Corps and the Guard. This army*

went off to operate in concert with the three German armies which had been victorious at Froeschwiller, against the army of MacMahon; which last had been concentrated at the camp of Chalons and had been reported in the neighbourhood of Rheims.]

We here see one of the characters attaching to Moltke's strategy: the battle dependent upon superior numbers conditioned by space—a mathematical dimension. This conception, which had produced the concentration on the Rhine and the Battle of Marnheim, Moltke repeated on the 25th of August when it was his task to stop the French Army on its march from the camp of Chalons towards Metz.

Given that this army, composed of four army corps, had been noted on the 23rd August at Rheims, it could, by the 25th, be on the Aisne River, and by the 27th on the Meuse. It could therefore be quite certainly held at Damvillers: because the German forces could reach that point in three days (that is, on the 28th). From that date the following German forces could arrive there: two corps from the Army of the Metz, three from the army of the Meuse, two corps from the 3rd Army. That is, seven corps all told against the French four.

On the 28th of August, therefore, the French would find themselves at this point (Damvillers), within a march of the Meuse, engaged in battle under conditions of very notable numerical inferiority. It may be seen from the map that Damvillers, standing as it does from Vouziers to Metz, is the centre of a circle which, within a radius of less than the distance from Damvillers to Vouziers, included all seven German army corps.

If one looks at the matter solely from the point of view of the result which Moltke was aiming at, this strategy had a mathematical certitude about it which was full of grandeur and simplicity. His result once obtained, his concentration once realized on the 20th of August at Damvillers (as during the first days of August at Marnheim), Moltke evidently would have his battle under the most favourable conditions. But can he be sure beforehand of that result? Can he be sure of effecting his concentration? He is in the presence of an adversary who is in action and who is separated from him by no great obstacle. What guarantee has he of achieving his groupment of troops without interference?

It is here that the inferiority of Moltke's strategy to that of Napoleon's (in 1806, for instance) appears. Napoleon's strategy of

1806 implied a concentration which at its origin was frankly defensive, only to become as frankly offensive at its close. The operation was covered, at every moment of its development, in its every phase, by a special organ which gave it strategic security: first, by covering troops; then, by general advance guard. Should the enemy appear and menace, Napoleon did not only seek security in the element of space but also through this force (the advance guard) capable of manœuvre and, if necessary, of resistance.

Moltke in 1870 did not apply these theories. He did not believe in strategic security or in the necessity of a covering force.

Had he done so, the result he was aiming at (concentration of forces) could have been achieved more surely and at less distance in spite of the enemy. Moreover, during all the time that this concentration was being effected it would have been, thanks to the covering force, not only safe from the blows of the adversary, but also capable of starting a new manœuvre or transforming that already begun, if such a necessity should impose itself during the process of concentration.

It is remarkable, in spite of its absence in 1870, that strategic security had been both known and practised by the German staffs, notably in 1814 and 1815.

The Russo-Japanese War

The Russian Army was constituted and maintained its being at the extremity of a single line of railway over 7000 miles in length. The Japanese Army was grouped and had to act on the far side of a sea 700 miles broad (the distance from Port Arthur to Nagasaki). The theatre of operations, Corea and Manchuria, has bad roads and few railways. The war in this region, therefore, went at a slower pace than it would have done in the more intensely living countries of Europe. In spite of a Higher Command of the very first order, it could not achieve those sudden strategic deployments, those rapid marches and those lightning attacks whence the first shocks of European struggles spring upon us like thunderclaps.

Again, the war did not put the national existence of either party at stake, but only their future. The political object of the war was therefore restricted; and therefore, also, the lessons it has for us are neither complete nor of immediate interest. The moral it affords is not one which we have to copy. But having once granted all this, we still see that the war obeyed the same dominating principles, especially on the Japanese side, as appear in other campaigns.

After methodical preparation the Japanese Command realized to its full limits the idea of strategic security. The 12th Japanese Division first disembarks at Tchemulpo, far from the enemy, and then advances to cover the disembarkation of the 1st Army at Tchinampo, 100 miles nearer the adversary.

The army thus constituted crosses the Yalu River in order to cover the disembarkations of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Armies in the Peninsula of Laiutang, so as to cut the communications of Port Arthur. The whole thing was a practical example of the theory of the Napoleonic advance guard.

When the Japanese passed to action an offensive spirit inspired all their decisions, and personal initiative animated the whole. Strategically as well as tactically they attacked; but their attack was not merely simple or frontal. It was constantly accompanied by manœuvre. It aimed strategically at the communications of its adversary, tactically at the envelopment of a wing with the object of destroying that wing and, again, of reaching the line of communication. At Mukden Nogi's army was not so much concerned with crushing the Russian Right by a flank attack as with getting behind it in order thus to compel the retreat of all the enemy forces. Hence we may say that the

manœuvre-battle of the Napoleonic epoch and of 1870 was transformed into an *operation-battle* lasting several days. One may say that the decision, even on the battlefield itself, had become a strategic affair and that the union between strategy and tactics was far closer than it has been in earlier days.

Since the assailant extends his lines beyond limits hitherto known, and the double pressure of frontal attack and flank attack are very greatly enlarged, a new call is made both upon the power of weapons and upon field fortification (the Japanese lineman was never without his entrenching tools); further, to render command possible under such circumstances, it depends upon the wire.

We have seen in all this that the mind retains the same universal conception of the essential act of war, but that by a wider and more careful use of material means it renders that act practicable in an ever-increasing dimension of space. The advance of modern industry modifies the forms of war and continues the evolution of the art of war, but it does not produce a revolution therein: it does not affect in any point the fundamental principles of the conduct of war.

ON MEN

Alvensleben

German general: Commander of 3rd German Corps in 1870. See, in the *Precepts*, the heading, "Moral Ascendancy."

Beaulieu

Austrian General, commanding the Army of Italy against Bonaparte in 1796.

Beaulieu had just taken over the command of the Austrian Army (he no longer commanded the Sardinians); he was seventy-two years old and had a situation and a reputation to save. "He was the product of sixty years of official pedantry, the thing most likely to depress the mind and the heart. He was the old servant of an old monarchy, the instrument of a heavy and starched aulic council" (Clausewitz). What would such a man look for? Before all he would try to avoid risking either his own reputation or the army and the interests of the monarchy, even if at such a game neither of them should gain anything.

His schemes, as well as his temperament, were inferior to those of Bonaparte. He still contemplated taking the offensive, but only

in order to drive the French from the Riviera, to take the department of Alpes-Maritimes; join hands with the English; thenceforward continue a war of posts in the mountains, and threaten, if need be, the French in Provence.

How greatly did such a conception of warfare differ from the new idea launched by Carnot, "follow up the enemy until complete destruction ensues"! Beaulieu's type of war was conducted for partial gains only. Preparation, execution, would likewise involve but a reduced and partial use of the means at hand.

Blücher

Prussian Field-Marshal engaged in the campaign 1806, 1807 and 1813, where he commanded the inner army of Silesia; the campaign of 1814 in France and of 1815 in which he decided the Battle of Waterloo. [In June 1815 his dispositions were judicious, his whole army could be concentrated in two days on whatever side Napoleon might present himself and in the direction where he might be attacked. He threw out two "feelers," the 1st and the 3rd Corps. Nevertheless, his own concentration which he had fixed for his army was somewhat too much exposed to an enemy offensive. In the face of an adversary such as Napoleon he had neither time nor space to manœuvre.]

Let us remember, besides, what Scharnhorst so rightly said when Blücher was appointed Commander of the army of Silesia in 1813: "*Is it not the manner in which the chiefs fulfil that task (commanding, imparting a resolve to other men's hearts), which makes them true warriors, much more than all other abilities or faculties theory may require from them?*"

Facts were soon to vindicate the soundness of this appreciation of Blücher, whom courtiers were still calling an imbecile and a sick old man, an embodiment of impotence; although—owing to his influence over the country—he was to his fellow-citizens the very embodiment of patriotism and had taken in hand all national claims; although—owing to his popularity within the army—he had conquered the soldier's love by constantly attending to the soldier's interests and was able to request, undertake, attain anything. Reposing on so considerable an influence, this man who dared to face the French Cæsar—a man of a little mind, but of a will, of a passion which would never tire and would never lay down arms—was to draw whole nations into the war and lead his armies to victory, just as he was to carry to Paris the sovereigns of Europe, and this in spite of themselves—at least, as regarded one of them, the Emperor of Austria, who

did not desire to dethrone his son-in-law and to make his daughter a widow.

Bonaparte

Just as the political revolution, which had recently taken place, might have come to an end after an ephemeral existence—with the Directory, for instance—had not Bonaparte proved, by taming it, that it was possible to base on these new principles the organization of a lasting society, so, without superior minds such as Hoche, Carnot, Bonaparte, and certain other Generals of the Revolution, the conception of the mass-levy, of war with unlimited resources, would have risked remaining a mere fancy, an utopia confuted by the armies and theories of the eighteenth century.

To master that epoch of the Revolution, it would not have sufficed to apply ancient processes to the new situations and resources created by it, as did commonplace men.

Therein lies the greatness of a time which supplied the man who was to launch the new principles—Carnot—and the men who were to apply those principles: Hoche, Bonaparte, etc.

So long as the early Generals of the Revolution were left to themselves, they continued, in spite of the fact that they were waging a

national war, to apply the methods of the eighteenth century to seek positions, lines, cordons.

Moreover, as a result of the new processes (for instance, the army housed and fed by the country it occupied) and of the considerable numbers used, the line, the cordon were still extended; weakness increased.

For a long time the remedy was not perceived by average minds.

Let us remember that Moreau himself entered Germany in 1800, four years after 1796, with an army which by destination, by organization, contained *one centre, two wings, one reserve*—an eminently rigid conception of things; while every one of these organs, like every early army of the Republic, had its own distinct, and purely geographical, object. This brings us back to the metaphor of the specialization of credit; to fixed and invariable apportionment.

And as one infirmity involves another, what do we see when Moreau enters Germany?

Such a block, composed of elements not interchangeable, drawn up on an invariable model, sometimes advancing, then going back, stopping in order to establish itself on a position, never seeking battle—such are the manœuvres of 1800 around Ulm, the retreat from the Black Forest, etc.

Carnot

It was Carnot who first initiated this manner of understanding, organizing, and conducting war. This we have from Dumouriez, the victor of the Argonne, who cannot be suspected in the matter since, after betraying his country, he never failed to sneer at his contemporaries—more especially at those in office. Yet he wrote in his *Recollections :*

" Carnot it was who created the new state of things in military affairs ; a state of things which Dumouriez had barely the time to adumbrate and which was perfected by Bonaparte."

The reason why the application was not at first very clear was because Carnot did not himself act in the field. Nevertheless it was he who wrote these words :

" *All the armies of the Republic will have to act offensively, but not everywhere with the same amount of means* (the apportionment of means depends on the goal to be reached). We must have a most offensive and decisive campaign ; we must constantly pursue the enemy until he shall be *completely destroyed* (a new result to aim at !)."

All his correspondence shows that he was the first, in that period of commotion and

revolutionary chaos, to try and put things in order once more. He sought to remedy the *scattering and crumbling* which were ruining France's considerable forces (fourteen armies in 1794), by means of convergence of effort and singleness of goal.

The numerous divisions set up tended to scatter, to isolate themselves, in order to live, march, and enjoy their independence; he showed them the importance of aiming all at one *same point.*

To the block of the ancient armies, which could no longer reappear, for it was utterly incapable of manœuvring on the new scale, he tried to substitute concordance and synchrony in many efforts starting from various points.

To reunite, to induce troops apparently scattered to co-operate, such was the first result he aimed at and reached.

And likewise, in one particular battle, at Wattignies, Carnot being present, the *idea of an attack by superior forces on a point of the line* first made its appearance.

All this is economy of forces.

Carnot did more than that, and indicated how the result must be sought. Thus he wrote :

"We prescribe to the Generals commanding-in-chief the armies operating in Germany to

see that the numerous and brilliant combats they have sustained shall be followed by more serious actions the results of which should be final. It is only by winning *great battles* that they will succeed in completely dissolving the Austrian army, and however skilful that army may be in retiring from one position to another, we hope that by coming into contact with it, they will enforce a *general engagement* the consequence of which will be to compel the enemy to fall far back. . . ."

We have travelled a long way from Marshal de Saxe; from that good general who thought he could wage war his whole life without giving battle. We are very near Napoleon, who said: "There is nothing I desire so much as a great battle"; who, according to Clausewitz, always looked out for a chance of fighting.

Clausewitz

See in the *Precepts* the heading, "Evolution of War."

Convention

[The Parliament of the French Revolution.]

When the Convention decreed the mass-levy, they at first produced in the military field nothing but chaos in all its forms, as well as that impotence which I have just mentioned in conducting operations of war.

Creating a new order of things does not involve the ability to give to that order from the outset the power of working, nor even life.

Dumouriez

Tactical results are the only things that matter in war. Nothing but decision by arms makes an award possible, for such a decision alone makes a *victor* and a *vanquished;* alone does it modify the respective situation of the opposing parties, of which one becomes the master of his own acts, while the other has to submit to the will of the adversary. Where there is no battle, there is no award, nothing is accomplished. Valmy proves it. Dumouriez finds himself in Sainte-Menehould. Is he outflanked? He is, for he finds himself cut off from direct communications with Paris; he resorts to indirect communications. But there has been no decision by arms, no tactical result. He decides that nothing is yet concluded: he does not withdraw. When he is attacked, he defends himself. As he is not beaten, it is the enemy who are beaten, for they have failed at the bar of battle.

De Failly

General commanding the 5th French Corps

in 1870. See also the *Precepts*, under the heading "Discipline."

By a dispatch sent out from Metz, on the morning of August 5th, the 5th Corps had been placed under Marshal de MacMahon. The Major-General, who transmitted this decision, believed the three divisions of the 5th Corps had met at Bitche in the evening. Marshal de MacMahon, for his part, telegraphed at 8 p.m. to General de Failly:

"Come to Reichshoffen as soon as possible with your whole army corps." He ended by saying: "I expect you to join me in the course of to-morrow."

Here was again a very clear order to be carried out: to come as soon as possible.

General de Failly answered at 3 a.m. on the 6th: "That he could only send the Lespart Division on that day."

In any case the Lespart Division alone received the order to start early on the 6th, by the road to Niederbronn; but the division, owing to rumours brought by frightened peasants, put off its departure; it did not start till 7.30 a.m.

No intelligence service had been regularly organized. Military decisions were dictated by rumours, founded or unfounded, generally magnified by fear; how could such decisions correspond to the reality of things?

General de Bernis, with the 12th Chasseurs, preceded the division. He had neither an advance guard nor a flank guard. Numerous roads and paths debouch on the left of the road followed; General de Lespart, therefore, feared lest he should be attacked in flank. He advanced only step by step. The column stopped at every cross-road. The country was searched in front and on the side by cavalry, often even by infantry detachments. The whole division rolled itself up; the column only resumed its advance after the reconnaissances had come back and stated that it could go ahead without danger.

A great number of halts resulted from this, to the particular bewilderment of the rank and file. Officers and men, excited by the noise of gunfire which had been heard since the morning, grew impatient of these delays and found that the measures taken were—to say the least of it—ill-timed. When they came nearer to Niederbronn, returning wounded were met, then fugitives; these latter became more and more numerous: they naturally said that things were going badly; they soon announced that the battle had been lost.

When they arrived on the heights overlooking Niederbronn, a retreating flood was seen crossing the town; it was five o'clock.

The Guyot de Lespart Division had been from 7.30 a.m. until 5 p.m.—more than nine hours—on the march to cover the fourteen miles distance from Bitche to Niederbronn.

The troops it was bringing up were physically and morally *exhausted.* Above all, these troops were *useless.* It was too late!

The whole of the 5th Corps had failed to keep its appointment.

It was its fault that the battle was lost.

Men who had not been made to march twenty miles in order to be led to victory, were now able and compelled to walk in a state of demoralization for nearly sixty miles (Abbatucci Brigade, from Niederbronn to Saverne) within thirty-six hours.

Without having fired a single shot, the 5th Army Corps, composed of gallant troops, of undeniable value, had withdrawn from the struggle in a state of annihilation and of depression; the men had been deprived of their moral strength; they no longer trusted their own chiefs; they stood ready to be routed. In the army's judgment, and for a long time to come, that corps was to be held responsible for the defeat at Frœschwiller; rightly enough if the command and the rank and file are made jointly responsible; wrongly, however, if one perceives the truth, which is,

that battles are lost or won by Generals, not by the rank and file.

Prince Frederick Charles

Commander of the German 2nd Army in 1870–71. See also in the *Precepts* the headings, "Activity of Generals" and "Moral Ascendancy."

Frederick Charles was a man of action in the highest degree; the mere thought of a great result being possible turned his head to the point of depriving him of the ability to perceive what should be his starting-point, or to measure all the import and risks involved. Von Moltke's hypothesis became a certainty to him.[1] He rushed on impetuously. Up to the end and unconsciously he will remain blindfold. He claimed a kill before finding his fox.

This is precisely what happens in general when a man starts from a supposed certainty which is founded on nothing. Just as Frederick Charles had not felt the need of getting hold of a well-founded truth, so he did not find it necessary to verify his belief, and the latter still held good to his mind. He did not seek for information on the 16th, as

[1] In the middle of August 1870, as Bazaine fell back on Metz, Moltke erroneously believed him to be retreating northwards.

we have seen; but more than this, on the same 16th, at noon, he dictated an order which settled the way in which the whole of the 2nd Army should arrive on the 17th at the Meuse (he was still banking on the alleged victory of the 14th), an order which the official Records of the Great General Staff has carefully preserved for us (although it was not carried out in the least); as though it did not contain the most bitter and violent criticism of the decision taken by that prince during these days; as though it were not a kind of ironical monument set up to him, the interest of which, from an historical point of view, can only consist in exonerating von Moltke from the responsibilities incurred during the acute crisis of August 16th—and 17th.

Gambetta

The glory of Gambetta in history will consist in having understood that the centre of power in a country is not its capital, but the nation itself, with its resources of every kind. The capital has two million inhabitants, soon suffering siege; but the nation has thirty-five millions still free to manœuvre and to attack. On this basis Gambetta organized the national war and a struggle to the bitter end.

Unfortunately, even the best brains have difficulty in escaping from the ideas of their time, and that is why Gambetta did not apply his theory completely.

He had organized national armies, but did not discover the art of waging a national war, nor did he shake himself free from the superstition that the fate of a nation depends upon that of its capital. Therefore did he give to those armies which he created as though by magic, the relief of Paris as their very first task. He wore them out in an attack upon numerous, well-instructed and victorious troops, in an offensive which was beyond their strength, and he bade them attempt an immediate and complete decision of which they were incapable. He directed them, for this purpose, through ground (the district of the Beance) most unfavourable to young and raw troops.

Utterly different would have been the programme of a national struggle thoroughly thought out. It would, in the first place, have aimed at defending foot by foot the territory which furnished resources for both armies, and only later would have attempted the deliverance of the country. The execution of such a plan would have involved at the outset a mere defensive. That is the only form of war possible to raw troops at first,

because it makes use of space, time and ground, and allows one to refuse one's adversary a decision, though that is what the adversary immediately needs if he is to break down the resistance and to conquer the country. In the last stage this plan would have involved an offensive, but an offensive then delivered with armies trained to war and confident against an enemy necessarily dispersed, worn out by sterile effort, and starved by the length of its communication. Such was the tactic demanded. The great patriot and powerful organizer could not accomplish this task because he had not special knowledge. Military institutions and ideas, like all others, only yield fruit when they are strongly founded on reality, and such strong foundation in this case meant complete possession of the nature of war and of an armed force. It was because he knew both so well that Carnot was able to draw victory from the principle of the mass-levy.

Garibaldi (in 1870)

Many tactical lessons might be drawn from these fights around Dijon.

The result, as is well known, was the great success of the Southern German Army.

As for Garibaldi, the repeated attacks of January 21st and 23rd induced him to believe

that he had before him important German forces. He remained on a cautious defensive: he praised his own successes in the most eulogistic terms.

The result was the disastrous defeat of the Eastern French Army.

Error is human, we may be told; it is not a crime.

The crime does not lie in that, but in the fact that Garibaldi, after being ordered to join the Eastern Army, had not done so. He never thought of carrying out his orders. His conduct was dictated by his own personal views, by his craving for personal success.

Generals of the Restoration

The new mechanics were no more grasped by Moreau and the early Generals of the Revolution, than later on by the French Generals of the Restoration who reorganized the lineal order, or than by the authors of our Field Service Book of 1883, which, until 1895, a few years ago, continued to affirm that: "Armies are composed of a centre, wings, and reserve; marching armies use the greatest possible number of roads, etc."

Guyot de Lespart

General commanding a division of General de

Failly's 5th French Corps in 1870. See "De Failly."

Kettler

German General commanding a brigade in 1871. See in the *Precepts* under the heading, "Advance Guard."

Kirchbach

German General commanding a division in 1870. See in the *Precepts*, under the heading, "Cavalry."

Moltke

Moltke, some have thought it possible to characterize by stating that he had "the merit of doing well all he did." It is an appreciation which would make him a sort of superior scholar; a sound appreciation all the same, as it throws a keen light on a man who served his country so well and attained by hard work such high results that he reached genius merely by being methodical.

* * * * *

Moltke: a Chief of Staff constantly appealing to his own intelligence, leaning on reason, an intellectual rather than a performer, meets the *unknown* by building up an *hypothesis;* a logical hypothesis it is true, but one

exclusively derived from his own imagination, and one which, by the way, he does not consider to be undisputable; he thus ends by framing a solution which he does not impose. After discussing the various combinations the enemy may adopt, he selects the most rational one, wherefrom his own scheme of manœuvre will be derived. His supposition *seems* in every respect to be true; however, it is *not* true. For want of belief in the accuracy of his own decision, he does not dare to impose it; he advises, he does not command, remaining a Chief of Staff instead of being a commander of armies. For that reason, the great results of the war of 1870 were only partly due to him. He behaved in the same way at Sedan, where he again ceased commanding on August 30th, and where the enveloping movement resulted from an understanding between two armies, not from a decision taken at headquarters. He behaved in the same way during the operations on the Loire.

Moreau

See in *Precepts* under heading, "Strategic Reserve."

Napoleon

See in *Precepts* under heading, "Object of

War," "Battle," "Manœuvre," "Work and Genius."

Saxe (Marshal)

See in *Precepts* under heading, "Transformation of War."

Swartzenberg

Austrian General commanding army of Bohemia in 1813–14. See the *Precepts* under the heading, "Transformation of War."

Steinmetz

General in command of the 1st *German Army in* 1870.

He was seventy-four years old in 1870. He was a veteran of the War of German Independence against Napoleon and active and vigorous in spite of his great age. He had already acquired fame in 1866 in difficult circumstances, through his indomitable energy and his spirit of enterprise. From that period the German Army had given him the name of "The Lion of Nachod." He was tireless, as hard for himself as he was for others, but irritable and suspicious. His manner of command was rough, and he was also of an extreme touchiness which sprang from pride and rendered his relations difficult with superiors and inferiors alike.

Von der Goltz

General commanding a German brigade in 1870. See in the *Judgments*, under "The War of 1870: Battle of Borny."

Wellington

(See "Blücher: his dispositions in 1815.")

In contrast with this view of the Prussian staffs, another would seem to have prevailed within the English Army. Being distributed from Mons to the sea (80 miles), from Tournay to Antwerp (60 miles), with headquarters at Brussels (45 miles from the most advanced body), it cannot assemble on any central point within less than four or five days. How can it hope to find those four or five days, with its most advanced cantonments (Tournay) within one day's march of the great French fortified town of Lille? It is, indeed, obvious that any important French attack starting from the neighbourhood of that town could not be sufficiently held up during the four or five days required for the contemplated concentration.

Wellington had never personally confronted Napoleon. As he did not know the violence and quickness of the Emperor's attacks, he very likely believed his dispositions to be sufficiently good to give him the time to meet

the adversary's undertakings, and more particularly to be able to join the Prussians.

ZIETHEN

Prussian General commanding an army corps in 1815 (the 1st Corps).

Ziethen's corps had suffered heavy losses, but attained a considerable result: that of *delaying* the battle[1] until the 16th; of *making* concentration *possible*.

As Clausewitz puts it: "*One sees thereby what caution and what delay circumstances, however little complicated they may be, unavoidably impose even on the most resolute of generals, on Napoleon.*"

Among the complications which Ziethen skilfully utilized, must undeniably be placed that double retreat by the roads to Gilly and Gosselies, which prevented Ney from going to Quatre-Bras, which made Napoleon's intervention necessary on that side, and thereby also delayed the action on the road to Namur.

It must be also pointed out that this divergent retreat did not prevent the 1st Prussian Army Corps from having its four divisions assembled on the following day.

[1] Ligny: June 16, 1815.

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